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THE CUP AND THE LIP

THIS NEW NOVEL by the author of *The White Witch of Rosehall* is set in the colourful Jamaican society of the 1930's. When beautiful Gladys Ludford arrives in Kingston and sets up an art shop, she finds that there are plenty of people paying her attention. Arthur Norris, the estate manager and heir to his wealthy bachelor uncle, is soon drawn under her spell and proposes to her. But Gladys is playing for high stakes, and Alfred Pemberton, Arthur's uncle, is *very* wealthy. . . .

There is still, however, many a slip betwixt the cup and the lip. Alfred is elderly, vain, and jealous, while Arthur is already being pursued by a beautiful married Indian woman who works on the estate. And Arthur was not a strong character. . . .

How this tangle is eventually unravelled makes a tense and dramatic story, while the island, that the author knew so well, provides an exciting and colourful background.

THE CUP AND THE LIP

By the same author

**THE WHITE WITCH OF ROSEHALL
MORGAN'S DAUGHTER
PSYCHE**

THE CUP AND THE LIP

HERBERT G. DE LISSER



LONDON

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CHAPTER 1

WHEN Mr. Pemberton got down to the Myrtle Bank Hotel, he felt that, so far, the day had been a most satisfactory one. He had come over to Kingston the night before and had put up at the Constant Spring Hotel. He had lunched, with a few other persons, at King's House, and then had formed one of the party taken by His Excellency Sir Arthur and Lady Mugsley to the Knutsford Park races. Ordinarily he did not care much for racing; but he would not have missed this particular meet for anything; he had known beforehand exactly what would happen. The Governor and his guests had arrived after the running of the first race; as they entered the enclosed grounds the semi-military band had burst into the National Anthem and everyone had stood to attention, the men doffing their hats. All eyes had been turned upon the gubernatorial party, and they had not failed to see that Mr. Pemberton was a member of it. That was something to live for; no man could account his life wasted, who, at times, was able to savour such perfect social triumphs.

He was early at the Myrtle Bank, but his host and hostess were already on the spot and waiting for him. Mr. Beaversham was a short, thin person with a greying moustache, a foxy expression, and an air of general pleasantness that had lured many a man into a business deal chiefly profitable to Mr. Beaversham himself. His wife was tall, well-featured, undeniably good-looking. The arrogance with which she carried herself contrasted sharply with the ingratiating manner of her husband; but she did not deem it necessary to endeavour to placate ordinary mortals. She was not in

business, and the social must be kept distinct from the business sphere of activity.

'You are the first to come, Alfred,' she said, as she shook hands with Mr. Pemberton. 'One or two of the others may be late; some people, you know, have no idea of punctuality.'

'It is the courtesy of kings,' said Mr. Beaversham, as they all walked towards the lobby. He intended a compliment to Mr. Pemberton, who, as a member of the Governor's Privy Council, might feel that he was connected, however distantly, with his Sovereign.

'You were with the Governor and Lady Mugsley at the races today?' asked Mrs. Beaversham, who of course already knew that he had been. Her family had not gone to the races. They had all expected an invitation to accompany Sir Arthur and Lady Mugsley; that having failed to arrive, they had decided not to patronise Knutsford this month. It takes a little time to live down a disappointment.

'Yes,' replied Mr. Pemberton casually, but pleased that the matter had been mentioned. Other persons, surely, must also be talking about it. 'Where is Hazel?' he inquired, alluding to Mrs. Beaversham's daughter.

'She'll be down in a moment; she promised to call for Miss Mayland, whose car is at the garage for repairs. Ah, here are the Smith-Parsleys.'

Mrs. Beaversham went off to greet these other guests, while Mr. Pemberton checked his hat in the coat-room, then went to sit at a table indicated by Mr. Beaversham, which had been reserved for the serving of the Beavershams' cocktails. He felt happier than ever.

After the other guests had arrived and the cocktails had been discussed, the party went in to dinner. In the meantime they had all referred to Mr. Pemberton's presence at the races that afternoon, though, in the case of a lesser man whom they had been obliged to meet at dinner, they certainly would have ignored the circumstance altogether, hold-

ing that the Governor had made a social mistake imperilling all the principles of sound public administration.

There were seven guests altogether, and Mr. and Mrs. Beaversham and their daughter Hazel. The Smith-Parsleys were there, a nice young couple who were universally voted to be 'so nice' by those who knew them. Mr. Smith-Parsley's father's name had been originally Smith; Smith and nothing more. But in the effluxion of time it had developed into a double-barrelled name, Parsley being added by the older man because he liked the sound of it, and thought it was somewhat more imposing than plain Smith. Young Smith-Parsley was a solicitor, a really clever lawyer, and popularly considered as the brightest and best of all the younger solicitors in the colony. He was only thirty-five, but already was making a handsome income.

His wife was a merry, calculating little woman, frankly fond of cocktails, her husband, her friends, her life, the world, and all that therein was. She was a pretty little soul, she loved gaiety, and everybody was glad of her company. Mr. Hepworth, another of the guests, was a man of about forty, who had inherited money and had had the good sense to keep it; Miss Mayland was, strictly speaking, Dr. Mayland; she had taken her medical degree in Edinburgh some time before but had never practised and probably never would. She too had means of her own. But she liked study, and she believed that a woman should have an object in life, though she did not seem to have exactly discovered what her object should be. She now devoted herself to philanthropic work, and found much amusement in studying the characters of the people she met.

Captain and Mrs. Trevour were the two other guests. The Captain was attached to the garrison, and was noted chiefly for a silent but inalienable devotion to whisky. His wife, a rather faded person, was distinguished mainly for an aptitude for agreeing with everybody's opinions.

The dinner over, the party strolled in the direction of the

hotel's ballroom where dancing was already in progress. Every member of the party danced, even Mr. Pemberton. But he was rather precise in his movements, not having acquired any proficiency in the new measures; he was just sixty, and he knew that a man of his age, who was also a member of the Governor's Privy Council, must endeavour to combine dignity with fun if he was to command the respect of the lower orders, and of his own class, who were inclined to be rather critical behind one's back. Mr. Pemberton was growing a trifle stiff in the legs, though he flattered himself that he was still remarkably youthful-looking. He would not, therefore fling those legs about, or attempt to get more out of them than was normally in them now: to look youthful and to be youthful are not exactly the same thing. Yet he could dance, and he very gallantly offered his arm to his hostess and led her into the ballroom. At that moment he more than ever believed that the Lord had him under His care. For the tune being played was that of an old-fashioned waltz, and the old waltz was a dance which Mr. Pemberton could manage perfectly. He was just then in that state of mild exaltation which leads many a successful man to feel and to believe that Providence spends most of its time in looking after such as they.

Presently there was a mild confusion among the dancers. One couple had collided with another, and this one had bounced into Mr. Pemberton and Mrs. Beaversham, thus causing them a slight but very momentary inconvenience. Mrs. Beaversham secretly felt that it was high impertinence for any ordinary person to collide with her; such a being could not possibly have that necessary reverence for wealth and position without which the foundations of the world could not be said to be secure. As for Mr. Pemberton, he only turned his head to see who it was that had put a hasty elbow into his ribs, he being prepared to forgive and forget, if the offender were a pretty girl. And this time it was. She was indeed very pretty, and before she was whirled off she

had flung at him, ever so brightly, a quick 'sorry!' which made him wish that she would hit him again, even harder this time. What a face!—how was it he had never noticed it before? Then he remembered that he lived in the country, and for the first time for years he questioned the wisdom of burying himself far away from his urban fellow-creatures, who would doubtless be delighted at the opportunity of sharing his society in the metropolis.

At the end of the dance, Mr. Pemberton led Mrs. Beaversham back to the southern veranda, where they found two rocking-chairs and sat down. Mr. Pemberton's eyes roved restlessly over the faces of the dancers as these streamed out of the ballroom; he was looking for the face he had seen but a few minutes before and which had interested him keenly. As good luck, his own particular luck, would have it, she was walking out through one of the upper doors; what was still more fortunate, she was traversing the whole length of the passage between the ballroom and the southern lawn, and this would shortly bring her within a couple of feet of him. But, of course, he only saw her when she came very near, and she gave no glance in his direction.

Again he was struck with her appearance. He had another quick impression of laughing brown eyes, bobbed, light-brown hair, which gleamed soft and silken in the electric light, straight, slender nose, and a provoking pair of lips. Then she had passed with her partner, a young man whom he did not know. He thought he had never before seen quite so attractive a girl.

'Do you know who that is?' he asked Mrs. Beaversham, indicating whom he meant by a slight movement of his head and eyes. Mrs. Beaversham had noticed how his eyes had been fixed on the girl, hence she had no difficulty in guessing whom he meant. She lifted her eyebrows.

'I don't know her' (she stressed the word 'know'), 'but I have seen her and I have heard that her name is Ludford. She has been out here now for a few months.'

'English?'

'Yes; or so I believe. I have never asked. You seem interested, Alfred.'

'She was the one who bounced into us during the last dance.'

'But even a bounce does not generally give rise to so much curiosity,' laughed Mrs. Beaversham. 'I am almost inclined to think that you want to dance with her.'

'Well, why shouldn't I? Only I don't know her, and as you don't either, you can't introduce me, I suppose?' He was wondering whether a great lady like Mrs. Beaversham need wait for an introduction to a much younger woman before addressing her. He was aware that the reputed possession of much wealth confers on one social rights and privileges to which the poorer sort can never dare aspire.

'Of course I could not,' answered Mrs. Beaversham with finality. 'I have no wish to meet the lady at any time, and that is why I don't know her.'

'What's against her?' asked Mr. Pemberton confidentially. He knew that there was much to be said against nearly everybody, but that no one ever seemed to suffer from an insinuated scandal. And the suggestion of scandal always gave a spice to conversation. It helped to make life worth living.

'I know of nothing against her. Only we move in quite different spheres, Alfred: that is all.' The voice indicated that that was more than enough. Mr. Pemberton thoroughly understood her point of view.

'I see,' he said.

'I am told she came out to Jamaica to open some sort of shop,' Mrs. Beaversham added, as though that explained everything.

Mrs. Beaversham's grandfather had been a grocer in a small way; consequently she always spoke with something like contempt of commerce. That was one way of living down the horrible past.

Mr. Pemberton had to admit to himself that, though he felt he was one of the most liberal-minded men alive, there was something wrong about the social status of anyone who had to keep a shop. A store was, obviously, different. A store was comparatively or positively a large place where a considerable assortment of goods was stocked; it represented capital on a fairly large scale. A shop was something small. The owner of a store might be admitted to have a right to social recognition, the proprietor of a shop was nobody. And ladies rarely kept a shop unless they had come down in the world. Even if they were ladies, they seemed by their method of earning a livelihood to have surrendered their social rights. He was still interested in the pretty stranger who had just passed; yet he was now conscious of feeling less desire to meet her than he had felt only a few minutes before. He would not, he confessed to himself, like to be seen dancing in a public hotel with a female shopkeeper. Appearances had to be maintained.

Mrs. Beaversham was in a conversational mood. She was usually in that mood when there was anybody to be discussed, a pedigree traced, a status settled. She was a critic, on the acid side; she was convinced that she owed it to her class, and especially to herself, that the truth about everyone should be known; in the interests of truth itself she told it—when it referred to anyone else. Her whole truth was always something more than the truth, for she admitted no qualifying circumstances; she would mention one's faults with simple severity, but would not trouble to say anything about one's virtues at the same time. Thus her word-pictures were all in primary colours; there was no shading anywhere. Seeing now that Mr. Pemberton was somewhat curious about this girl, and realising the inconvenience to her of persons in her circle associating with persons not in that circle, she felt that he ought to be warned in time. He might meet the young woman later and might actually want to introduce her to the Beavershams. Such things had happened before.

It had not always been possible to prevent calamities. Still, one should try to; that was a duty not to be ignored.

'Very little is really known about her,' she continued. 'She came out this year, but what part of England she came from, who her parents are, what she did in England, who she was, and who she is, nobody here knows. She isn't anybody, you see, or we should have heard something definite about her.'

'That's so,' admitted Mr. Pemberton; 'she would have brought letters, or she would have . . . well, she would have got to know people like you in some way or other.'

'Quite so. We would have taken her up, for I must admit that she looks quite presentable. But she hadn't been here any time before she opened this shop of hers. That's evidently what she came out for.'

'What does she sell?' asked Mr. Pemberton, though his interest was rapidly waning now. Mrs. Beaversham had almost killed it.

'Curios and things of that sort: art objects, she calls them. I believe she says she is an artist, but that is probably only talk.'

'Objects of art?' exclaimed Mr. Pemberton. 'But that is not the same thing as shop-keeping, Arabella; it is altogether a different thing.' He felt elated at learning that this girl was one to whom the mysterious appellation of artist might be applied. That word could cover a multitude of things offered for sale. Here was, as it were, a new angle from which she might be approached.

Just then the orchestra struck up the opening bars of the next dance, and the dancers began hurrying in from the lawn and the lobby. They flocked into the long veranda on their way to the ballroom, and Mr. Pemberton's eyes eagerly scanned the faces for the one that had attracted him. He might easily miss her, he knew, for there were other entrances to the veranda besides the western door. He kept glancing in more than one direction, therefore, and it was when he turned his head westward again that he saw her,

and an exclamation of surprise almost burst from his lips.

For now she was with a new partner, and this was no other than his nephew Arthur. The young man was nodding to him gaily as he passed, and the girl was also looking in his direction. Arthur called out a cheery greeting to Mrs. Beaversham, who returned it with a bow just a trifle cold. Then the couple disappeared into the ballroom, and Mr. Pemberton, who had half thought of asking Mrs. Beaversham if she would dance with him again, decided that it would be nicer if they sat out this dance. This way he would the quicker get rid of her.

'It's so hot in that room that I don't feel I ought to ask you to dance this one with me, Arabella,' he said; 'besides, you are so interesting a conversationalist that it is always a pleasure to have a long talk with you. Did you see who Arthur was with?'

'Yes, and I can't say I quite approved.'

'But if the girl is an artist and sells objects of art, you know. . . .'

'I don't see what difference that makes. She has other things in her shop, and who would buy artistic objects in Jamaica from somebody we don't know? When we want these things, we go to England to get them, or we get a catalogue and select what suits us, and send for them. It is true Arthur is young, but why not mix with people of your own class? It never does to have two or three sets of friends.'

'I am more democratic than you,' laughed Mr. Pemberton, who just then felt that he was almost a socialist, so expansive had his creed of equality suddenly become. He wished that Beaversham would put in an appearance. It was unreasonable for Beaversham to leave him alone with his wife for so long a time.

'Well, whatever you do, don't ever introduce me to that girl if you should get to know her, Alfred. Or any of us.'

'All right, my dear; I will respect your wishes. But, really, you are much too strict; you should relax a little.'

'I have an unmarried daughter. You are a bachelor and have only your nephew. A man can know people that it is best that a woman should not. And if you begin to mix with everybody—'

'I agree,' assented Mr. Pemberton. 'If you mix with everybody you will lose your own position. I have told Arthur so many a time. But this Miss Ludford looks a nice girl, and if she is an artist, that makes a whole lot of difference.'

Then fortune was again most kind to Mr. Pemberton. Mr. Beaversham came along to see how his wife was getting on. He himself danced but rarely, and at public dances he made it a rule to dance first with his wife. He was certain that this procedure was duly observed and commented upon, and made his dancing a sort of high ritual as well as a great and glorious example. He now came to suggest to his wife that this ritual should be proceeded with. And, inwardly, Mr. Pemberton thanked God.

Mrs. Beaversham rose and went away with her husband. Mr. Pemberton also got up with alacrity and made his way out to the lawn. He strolled down the Palm Avenue of the hotel, now illuminated by many-coloured lamps. The lawn was partly in light, partly in shadow, and groups were dotted about it, sipping drinks, laughing and talking, while from the ballroom came the sound of a merry air to which a mass of couples moved swiftly. Mr. Pemberton continued his walk until he came to where the long fronds of the coconut palms were stirring in the breeze. He ascended the short esplanade that overlooked the sea-bath; beyond were the shimmering waters of the harbour of Kingston; overhead was a half-moon that made radiant the tropic scene.

He was in a mood to be romantic. He had had a happy day, had dined well, had imbibed just sufficient champagne to give him that feeling of exhilaration in which one could appreciate the beauties of nature, provided that one had an excellent cigar to smoke and could look forward to meeting presently an uncommonly attractive girl. It was true he was

sixty, but he felt quite youthful just now. Twenty years ago he would have thought of himself as being an old and almost decrepit man at sixty, but it was wonderful how, as he had drawn nearer to that age, he had discovered that it did not mean old age at all. He had altered his scale of values in so far as age was concerned. At eighty he would be old, but that was twenty years away. He was now, strictly speaking, only middle-aged. He had enjoyed his life hitherto; he intended to enjoy it to the end; he was a bachelor; he would remain a bachelor. But life might be rendered more interesting to a bachelor by acquaintanceship and friendship with lovely ladies, and he had known a few of these, in the very best society, and it had been pleasant to entertain and to be entertained by them, and they had always been nice to him although they must have seen long ago that he was not a marrying man. As a rule, he had not sought his friends amongst any except the best people, though he had noticed that some of those who were not the best today became so tomorrow, and that it might be hazardous to prophesy in society who would never be amongst the best. He, however, had usually waited to be quite sure; but now he felt that he could safely follow the advice he himself had given to Mrs. Beaversham: he could relax. He wanted to meet Miss Ludford; quite suddenly she had interested him. Clearly, she was not yet in the higher ranks of society, but she claimed to be an artist, and Mr. Pemberton had heard that artists elsewhere sometimes rose very high indeed socially. If elsewhere, why not here? And, indeed, what did it matter anyhow? For the first time in his life he was conscious of a contempt for hard-and-fast social divisions and distinctions, and he felt proud of that feeling. He was rising to new heights of mental and moral superiority. Meantime he must find his nephew at the close of this dance. Now was the time to get introduced to Miss Ludford.

The music ceased, the crowd was pouring once more from out of the ballroom. Mr. Pemberton left the esplanade and

slowly took his way up the illuminated Palm Avenue, down which flowed a stream of chattering people, eager for the cool night wind and the glamour of the tropical night. He reached the entrance to the hotel's lobby; standing there he saw his nephew and two other young men with him. He moved towards them, wondering what had become of the girl.

'Well, Arthur,' was his greeting, 'how are you? I didn't know I should meet you here tonight.' He nodded to the other men as he spoke. He knew them both slightly, but did not remember their names.

'Only made up my mind at the last moment to come,' said Arthur. 'I ran up to Kingston today and was of half a mind to go back to Portland tonight. But I thought I'd stay over. Won anything at the races?'

'A few shillings. As you know, I never bet heavily.'

Any observer would have noticed that Mr. Pemberton's nephew resembled him generally; yet there were marked differences. Mr. Pemberton was of middle height, dapper, clean-shaven, with hair greying at the temples, nose slightly aquiline, and keen grey eyes. He had a strong chin and firm mouth; he carried himself as one very conscious of his importance in the scheme of things local. You felt that he was careful never to forget himself. Arthur, on the other hand, was tall, somewhat loosely-built, with blue eyes, brown hair, and straight nose. He had an intelligent forehead, a pleasant expression; his face gave you an impression of good-nature. At bottom, you would have concluded, his uncle was a determined man, Arthur more agreeable, more lovable, while strength and determination were not yet among the qualities highly developed in him.

The two were very fond of one another; in so far as differences of age permitted, they were warm friends. Arthur always said that his uncle had been exceptionally good to him, and he was grateful. Mr. Pemberton cared more for Arthur than he thought it was consistent with dignity to

express. He saw no faults worth speaking of in the young man. Meanwhile Arthur was earnest at his work as his uncle's planting attorney, and knew that some day he would inherit his uncle's wealth. Provided, that is, that he did not in the interval displease the older man seriously. For he knew that Mr. Pemberton had it in him to be hard and unforgiving.

'Who,' casually inquired Mr. Pemberton, 'was the pretty girl I saw you taking into the ballroom a little while ago?'

'She? Oh, she is Miss Ludford; a real good sort. I should like you to meet her, Uncle Alfred, if you don't mind.'

'Certainly I don't mind, my dear boy; only too pleased to meet any of your friends; where is she?'

'Gone to powder her face, I believe. It seems that no woman can dance or dine or even take a drink without wanting to powder her face, and that ceremony sometimes takes an unconscionable length of time. But here she comes.'

He turned towards the advancing girl. (His two friends had drifted away.) 'Cladys,' he said, 'this is my uncle, Mr. Pemberton, whom I have told you about.' The girl held out her hand at once with a bright smile and a 'how do you do?'

'So you are the young lady who danced into me tonight,' said Mr. Pemberton. 'Now I am sure you didn't know I had marked your face.'

'No, indeed; I rather hoped you hadn't. I was ashamed of myself, though it was my partner's fault.' She had really forgotten who it was she had run into, but she didn't mention that. It would not have sounded as nice as what she actually said.

'I am glad it happened,' returned Mr. Pemberton gallantly, 'for it caused me to observe you particularly.' He bowed as he spoke. The gesture and words conveyed the fact that his attention had been arrested.

He saw her very clearly now; her bright eyes, her delicate straight nose, her wonderful colouring. He remarked also, though subconsciously, that her lips, though alluring, sug-

gested firmness, and that the chin beneath them was round and strong. An intriguing as well as an attractive countenance. She was of middle height and slim, though with no touch of angularity. And she dressed with exquisite taste. 'Miss Ludford is an artist,' Arthur mentioned.

'A smatterer,' she corrected.

'Modest,' added Mr. Pemberton, 'and now,' he went on, 'what about finding a seat on the lawn and having something to drink? You must be thirsty after your dances.'

'I should love to,' she answered, and Arthur laughed through sheer exuberance of spirits and said he was always thirsty.

They found a seat on the lawn, ordered and sipped drinks, and Mr. Pemberton felt himself even happier than he had when entering the Grand Stand at Knutsford Park in the Governor's company. This was extraordinary, for he had not thought exaltation could go higher than it had during the afternoon of that day. He wanted to ask Miss Ludford to dance with him, but shrank from taking her away from a partner so much nearer her own age. But she might have a spare dance later on. He inquired, she gladly consented to let him have the sixth dance; it was a waltz (the young men were not fond of waltzing, neither was she herself, but she said nothing about that). Mr. Pemberton had intended to go back to Constant Spring Hotel before midnight, being a man of regular habits; but he decided to break all rules on this occasion. The sixth dance would come on about midnight.

Arthur took Gladys Ludford away, and Mr. Pemberton went in search of the party he had dined with. Only Mr. Hepworth he found disengaged, for Mr. Hepworth did not dance. They sat together until Mr. Pemberton's engagement came round, and he hurried off to claim his partner. As but few persons bothered with the waltz, those few who did were naturally all the more noticeable and noticed, and some persons remarked to one another that Gladys Ludford

had got to know Mr. Pemberton, who was at the very top rung of the social ladder, and that this was something of a social triumph for her, even though he was a man and not a woman. Mrs. Beaversham observed the dancing pair, and recalled the interest Mr. Pemberton had displayed in Gladys Ludford earlier that night. She did not like this development. Not because there was anything serious in it, but because it might aid Gladys socially; and Mrs. Beaversham considered that one's duty to society was not to aid others, but to keep them down.

CHAPTER 2

IN THE November morning, the principal thoroughfare of Kingston, known as King Street, which had earlier been swept and flushed, looked clean and cool. Its buildings were of moderate height and sufficiently individualised in appearance to rescue the scene from a depressing monotony. The shops—or stores, as they are invariably called in the West Indies—were open or opening. Gladys Ludford, in spite of having been up till two o'clock that morning, arrived at eight promptly; awaiting her were her assistants, Kingston girls, who attended to all the ordinary customers and did most of the actual work of the little establishment.

Gladys was feeling buoyant, even happy, this morning, in spite of the fatigue and late hours of the night before. She had made more than one good impression, even if mainly upon men. The women had held aloof, the women of the class to which Mr. Pemberton and Arthur Norris, his nephew, belonged; but, after all, she knew quite a number of nice girls and their mothers already, and never was at a loss for a female companion with whom to sit or to go out when she wanted one. The dance, then, had been a success from her point of view; she found the world fair just now; and as, standing for a moment on the sidewalk, she glanced northwards, she enjoyed the view of the Central Park, but a little distance away: the Park through which a long driveway ran, on either side of which were long parterres of scarlet and yellow cannas, and umbrageous trees, and green lawns, and in the middle of it all a fountain which threw a steady jet of silver water upwards.

It had rained recently, and now the Park was at its fairest. She saw the palms, and the plants that blossomed into trail-

ing bunches of golden flowers whose name she did not know; she saw the brilliant flush of red-hibiscus and the sparkling sky.* The thoroughfare had not yet begun to fill with motor-cars, but presently that would commence; meantime the trams and motor-buses were bearing the employed workers—white, black and brown—to their various destinations, and carts full of water-coconuts were drifting downwards, their drivers calling out their vegetable drink in words unrecognisable to anyone who had not lived for some time in Jamaica. Hundreds of pedestrians were already passing to and fro, dark-complexioned mainly, decently clothed, absorbed in their own affairs. The sunlight of the southern tropics glowed softly: later on it would fall like a fiery sword upon this street. The newsboys passed along shouting forth the names of the papers they sold, and Gladys called one of them and bought a paper from him; she wanted to see if she had been mentioned among those who had attended the ball at the Myrtle Bank Hotel last night. Before going inside, she gave a quick, critical glance at the show-window wherein was displayed a selection of the goods she sold. She was satisfied with this.

She passed into the shop. She had rented one side of the lower floor of a rather narrow two-storeyed building opposite to the Parish Church. She had divided this into two compartments; the first which looked upon the street, being the longer. In this a lengthy show-case of plate-glass formed a counter and separated the customers from the attendants; in this show-case were portraits of celebrated people, English mainly, coloured reproductions of great paintings, vases that were imitations of ancient Greek and Renaissance Italian work, and things of that sort. But in the shop there were some original paintings, too, in oils and water-colours of respectable workmanship by artists in England who had made no name as yet, and might never become anything more than moderately known; and there were some etchings, and the more expensive sort of perfumery.

There were curios, both native and imported, and shawls which claimed to have been made in China and Japan and Spain—great squares of silk with striking designs of birds and flowers and conventional arabesques. But the name of the establishment was The Art Studio, and its principal business, as advertised, was to sell things of an artistic description. And it had been put about that Miss Ludford was an artist. Art was, so to speak, brought within the reach of the pockets of the Jamaica people. And an artist had appeared among them.

In the inner and smaller room, which she now entered, a few drawings and paintings were hung against the wall. The apartment was small, but nicely fitted out with three comfortable wicker chairs, a wicker table on which there was usually a bowl of flowers, and a Crex carpet of really neat design. A few of the things on the wall were Gladys's own work: some sketches in pen and ink, a mediocre study of still life, and a copy of a picture in the National Gallery, London, depicting women weeping over a dead body. These things proclaimed Gladys to be no artist. They were ordinary, poor, and the result of painful effort; yet they were exhibited, and the fact of their exhibition indicated that the girl had plenty of practical brains. For she had calculated that hardly anyone in this tropical country would know much more about art than she did, and that the opinion of the few who had real knowledge would not matter. They were not likely to go about condemning her; they would probably take no notice of her work, and that would be all. The things that she offered for sale were not her own; they were good enough; they came within the means of those who wished to have pictures and objects of art in their houses. If there should be any criticism of her taste, that could always be attributed to the saddening lack of appreciation which the artist has to struggle against, as a rule, during the greater part of his life. Gladys usually kept on the wicker table, with the flowers, some sketching paper with marks

upon it, and this she changed at intervals. It suggested that, when time allowed, she engaged in original work. It justified, in a manner of speaking, the appellation of Art Studio which dignified her shop.

She had taken off her hat and was busy setting out one or two of her everlastingly unfinished sketches when there came a rap at the door that divided the two compartments. She said, 'Come in,' and Arthur Norris made his appearance.

'I told you I'd come around this morning, Glad,' he exclaimed, 'but I hardly expected to find you down so soon. Great night, wasn't it?'

'Lovely, Arthur; and I enjoyed myself so much, thanks to you.'

'Nonsense, you would enjoy yourself anywhere, but I am glad I came over for the dance. Who would have thought you'd have met my uncle! And he was taken with you; he spoke to me about you afterwards. It was great!'

'What did he say?' she asked eagerly.

'Oh, that you are a very nice girl, and that he was pleased to have met you. He wanted to know how I had come to know you.'

'What did you tell him?'

'I told him that a friend had introduced me to you at the Myrtle Bank three months ago, and that we had been friendly since. He seemed quite pleased. I wasn't sure whether, when he knew. . . ' Arthur stopped short, as if in doubt how to continue.

'Yes?' she prompted.

'Well, what I mean is that these oldsters are very peculiar and as I am his only near relative I wondered what he would say when he learnt how very friendly we are.'

'Why should he say anything about that, Arthur? There's nothing wrong with me, surely!'

'Of course not, Gladys; you know I don't mean that.' His voice was reproachful. 'What I mean is . . . well, hang

it all, I am very fond of you, you know; I have told you so.'

'Yes; but don't tell me so again here, and' in a loud tone of voice, she smiled. 'The girls outside can hear quite easily, and I don't want people to be saying that young men come here during business hours to make love to me. So you are relieved, are you, that your uncle has no personal or social objections to me?'

'He couldn't have any,' replied Arthur stoutly: 'but I certainly am pleased that he likes you and thinks a lot of you. It makes things easier.'

She did not ask him what things had been made easier; she knew. Arthur had shown for some time now that he was gone on her; he came to Kingston to see her whenever he could; he was always singing her praises, paying her compliments; but he had hardly ever spoken of his uncle. She knew that that was because he feared that while 'the old man', as he called Mr. Pemberton, would have nothing to say against a mere friendship between him and her, it would probably be very different if Arthur hinted at a much closer relationship. Arthur had never proposed to her, though he had made plenty of love. He had shrunk from such a momentous step. He thought she could never guess what was passing in his mind, but she read him like a book; as, however, she was satisfied she did not love him, she suffered no emotional misery, no malady of passion or depression; even her self-esteem was not much wounded, for she believed in herself and felt certain that the people who looked down upon her now, because they said she was nobody, would be very pleased to know her later on. She had a great, a profound faith in her future. Her self-confidence was superb; but for that she would not have come to this country, alone, to make a living, and a place in society for herself. Nevertheless, she was thrilled to hear Arthur say that his uncle thought highly of her, and that thus things were made easier. She looked at him now with more thoughtful, appraising eyes than ever

before. He assumed a greater consequence in her mind. She might not love him, but there were other worthwhile things in life besides love. Position, for instance. . . .

'I am going to suggest to Uncle Alfred that he should invite you down to Mapleton for a week-end,' resumed Arthur, 'when he has some guests there. I want him to know you better, Glad; I want him to think as much of you as I do.'

'That will be a great deal, won't it, Arthur?' she laughed.

'A whale of an amount,' he protested ardently. 'But aren't you going to ask me to sit down?'

'No, my dear boy, not now. These things are noticed and talked about, and there is any amount of talking in Jamaica. What about the Liguanea Club this afternoon? Are you going up?'

'Well, yesterday I thought I should have to go back to Portland today; Uncle Arthur doesn't like me to stay away from the property too long, you know. But I guess I can remain over a few hours longer, and then go back tonight.'

'It must be rather hampering to have to think what somebody else may feel and say about one's movements,' observed Gladys thoughtfully. 'However, I shall see you this afternoon?'

'Yes.'

'Good. Well, then, run away now. I have a sketch to finish.'

'Oh, you artists,' he grumbled, 'for ever thinking of your work.'

She smiled, she was gratified that Arthur took her artistic pretensions seriously. She nodded to him gaily as he went out. Then she began to make marks on the sketching paper.

Not half an hour had passed when there came another rap at her door; she put down her pencil and called out, 'Come in.'

She started up as this second visitor entered. He was the last man she would have expected that morning.

'This is a surprise, Mr. Pemberton,' she candidly

confessed. 'But how good of you to visit my Studio. Won't you sit down?'

'Thank you.' Mr. Pemberton took the chair indicated, and glanced about him appreciatively. Then his eyes rested on the figure of the girl, slim, in her soft and cool white dress, with a touch of colour about it: an elegant figure. It was singularly pleasant to be there.

'I have heard a good deal about this Studio of yours, heard it spoken of very highly,' he lied, for no praise had fallen from Mrs. Beaversham's lips, 'so I thought I would drop round today and see some of your pictures. I don't know much about art, never studied it. But I can appreciate a good picture when I see one, and things like that, you know. You have a very fine Studio here.'

'Not bad,' Gladys admitted, but she noticed that he was looking at her, and not at anything on exhibition.

'It was an excellent idea of yours, coming out to Jamaica to teach us something about art,' continued Mr. Pemberton earnestly. 'We know a lot about bananas, and sugar, and rum; but art—well, we don't pretend we do.'

She politely murmured something, which sounded like anything you cared to make it. She had not found the local knowledge of rum to be at all deficient.

'But now,' he went on, 'you are going to effect a change. I think that the better classes here have real artistic feeling; what they lack is knowledge; don't you think so?'

She agreed with him warmly; she had recognised, she said, much artistic feeling in Jamaica. She did not go into details, such as how such feeling had been manifested. Generalities were safer. By keeping to them, both she and Mr. Pemberton were on safe ground.

'When,' he began again—but now there came another rap at the door. Gladys thought that the number of visitors this morning was extraordinary; it was not yet ten o'clock, and already three persons had asked for admission to this semi-private room. But this time, instead of saying 'come in', she

went to the door to see who it was. It was Mrs. Smith-Parsley, whom she knew by sight, but had never spoken to before.

The reason of Mrs. Smith-Parsley's presence there just then may be easily explained. She had been driving downtown when she saw Mr. Pemberton alight from his car and move towards the entrance of The Art Studio. She had noticed the night before, as had so many other persons, that Mr. Pemberton had danced with the pretty Miss Ludford and had paid her some attention. Seeing him going into Miss Ludford's place of business so soon after, therefore, Mrs. Smith-Parsley was inspired with curiosity: what was the meaning of it? It became almost a moral duty to discover that meaning, or at least to try to do so. She ordered her chauffeur to stop at the end of the block, then alighted and walked slowly back towards The Art Studio. This would give Mr. Pemberton a few minutes to make his greetings, and would indicate that Mrs. Smith-Parsley had not seen and followed him purposely.

Standing at the door between the two compartments of the shop, Gladys looked at the newcomer with inquiring eyes.

'Miss Ludford, isn't it?' said Mrs. Smith-Parsley. 'I should like to see some of your paintings, your own, I mean. I—I have heard of them and I thought—' She left the sentence unfinished. She sensed that Gladys did not want to give her any personal attention now. Hence her request, which could only be satisfied by Gladys herself.

And she had spoken loudly. She wanted Mr. Pemberton to hear her voice.

'Won't you come in?' asked Gladys, who guessed that it was no mere chance that had brought Mrs. Smith-Parsley there so quickly after Mr. Pemberton's arrival. Such a coincidence did not seem natural.

'Oh, Mr. Pemberton, how do you do?' cried Mrs. Smith-Parsley. 'Who would have thought of meeting you here!

Looking at works of art? That's what I have come to do too. I heard of Miss Ludford's pictures, and thought I would drop in to see them.'

'You are quite right,' approved Mr. Pemberton; 'we ought to show more appreciation of art than we do. That is why I came myself this morning. My nephew Arthur, who is a great art enthusiast'—Arthur would have been surprised to hear this description of him—'mentioned Miss Ludford's pictures to me; indeed' (Mr. Pemberton fabricated cheerfully) 'he asked me to come and see them.'

'Arthur has a keen eye for beauty,' remarked Mrs. Smith-Parsley a trifle ambiguously. 'What is this?' she asked, fixing her eyes on the copy of the painting in the English National Gallery.

'Nothing much, a copy that I made,' said Gladys.

'But how beautiful,' exclaimed Mr. Pemberton, 'how artistic!'

'Yes, isn't it,' agreed Mrs. Smith-Parsley; she could not forget that Mr. Pemberton had, as a big landowner and a man with many business interests, a great deal of legal work, and, after all, her husband was a rising solicitor who desired to have clients of just this type.

Mr. Pemberton fixed his eyes on the painting, assuming a profoundly critical expression. He summoned to his assistance sundry expressions he had heard or read once upon a time in connexion with art.

'What exquisite colouring,' he murmured.

'Exquisite,' agreed Mrs. Smith-Parsley.

'And—er—the perspective; do you perceive the perspective?'

'Wonderful,' exclaimed Mrs. Smith-Parsley, 'perfectly wonderful,' wondering at the same time what a perspective was.

'This,' said Mr. Pemberton positively, 'is a fine work of art.'

'No doubt about that,' acquiesced Mrs. Smith-Parsley. She

observed the enthusiasm of Mr. Pemberton. Her husband was still a young man, and she herself had much to do before she could feel that her social position was absolutely assured. Mr. Pemberton could do something to assure that position. If appreciation of this mysterious thing called 'perspective' was a way to such assurance, why not take it? If agreement in artistic criticism would help, why not agree? Besides, Mr. Pemberton might be right for all she knew. The picture looked sad and sorrowful, but perhaps all great art was melancholy—Mrs. Smith-Parsley did not know and did not care.

'I should like to acquire such a painting for my drawing-room at Mapleton,' said Mr. Pemberton reflectively, 'unless,' he added, turning to Mrs. Smith-Parsley, 'you want it.'

The lady hastily asserted that she did not. Her manner left no room for doubt. Yet she remembered she had professed to come to look at Miss Ludford's work. And one hardly goes to see paintings or drawings, in a place where they are for sale, without some sort of pretension to be a purchaser. Mrs. Smith-Parsley now had the feeling that she was caught. Could she escape from this place, she asked herself, without being victimised?

Happily, Mr. Pemberton seemed relieved that she would not take advantage of his generosity in offering to leave to her Miss Ludford's great work of art. 'I should like to buy that picture,' he said to Gladys, 'if you will let me have it.'

'Oh, but it is only a copy, Mr. Pemberton,' Gladys answered. As she spoke she was rapidly calculating how much she might reasonably ask for it. She would never pretend that she had done more than copy the original; she would run no foolish risk. Prudence was part of her character. But if anyone wanted the thing she had done, why of course she would sell it. Business was business. The actual work she had performed on it might be valued at five pounds, if computed in terms of time, though she well knew that all artists would say that her time had been utterly

wasted. If she asked ten pounds, that would mean a profit. It wasn't much but it was something. Mr. Pemberton, however, seemed keen on the picture; he was praising it to her face. It would never do for her to depreciate its value. This might be the beginning of an excellent reputation among the upper circles of Jamaica, who would judge artistic objects almost entirely by their price.

'A copy, Miss Ludford,' said Mr. Pemberton earnestly, remembering that he was a local Privy Councillor and therefore, presumably, a judge of most things earthly, 'a copy may be better than the original. I don't pretend to be any authority, but it seems to me that this beautiful painting has a great deal of soul in it, real soul. What do you think, Mrs. Smith-Parsley?'

Mrs. Smith-Parsley at once recognised a super-abundance of soul in the picture; she fell back a foot or so and gazed at it ecstatically. Now that she was not to be wangled into buying it, she could afford to become an enthusiastic art connoisseur.

'Very well,' said Mr. Pemberton, with that definite air he always assumed when signing a contract for bananas or agreeing with the Governor in Privy Council, 'will you take fifty pounds for it, Miss Ludford?'

'Oh, I couldn't think of that, Mr. Pemberton,' cried Gladys, genuinely astonished at the sum offered. But Mr. Pemberton misunderstood her. He imagined she thought the amount offered too little, and straightway he had a funny feeling somewhere in his inside. For though he possessed plenty of money, he was careful; though he was willing to purchase a picture he had no earthly use for, he never liked to spend much on anything of no obvious material value. Yet he would not look stingy now for the life of him. 'Please say what you will take,' he said, with a very fine air. 'A hundred? I am no judge of the value of such things, except that I know that this one is beautiful.'

Gladys realised that he wanted to do something that

would make him shine in her eyes. He did not really want the daub. He—he wanted her good opinion; he, the great Mr. Pemberton! She made up her mind instantly; her quick intelligence determined her course of action. 'I will take the fifty pounds you have offered,' she said, 'but not a penny more. Not a penny. And, mark you, I don't think it is worth fifty pounds.'

Even Mrs. Smith-Parsley was impressed. This, undoubtedly, was an artist and not merely a saleswoman. All artists were supposed to be a bit peculiar, eccentric, stupid in practical affairs; and surely it was eccentricity, not to say stupidity, to refuse a hundred pounds and take fifty instead. This must be the artistic temperament of which Mrs. Smith-Parsley had heard. Unquestionably it was something astonishing and even to be deplored.

As for Mr. Pemberton, he was delighted. He was about to patronise art, to please Miss Ludford, and to establish friendly relationships with her, at exactly the figure he had originally had in mind. And he had discovered that she was not mercenary, that she had a soul above money; and this discovery had been made in the presence of a witness who would testify to it, and who would be able to say what should prove that Miss Ludford was a veritable artist, one of those strange creatures who lived for what was called art, and who so often died gloriously of starvation, while the growers of bananas or the dealers in sugar waxed wealthy, were clothed in purple and fine linen (or their modern equivalent), and fared sumptuously every day. Mr. Pemberton felt uplifted; who could refuse to admit this admirable artist into society, the highest and the best society? And he had been indirectly instrumental in establishing her claim to such lofty recognition.

'If you will have my picture done up for me,' he announced, 'I will take it. And I will give you a cheque at once. I feel that I am a very lucky man. Now you must promise me that some day, early, when I have a house party, you will

come down to Mapleton to see it hanging on my drawing-room wall.'

'Oh, Mr. Pemberton, you are really too kind!' exclaimed Gladys, flushing with pleasure.

'The kindness will be on your part if you come,' he replied gallantly; and now Mrs. Smith Parsley, seeing how the land lay, determined to do a stroke of business for the legal firm of Smith-Parsley and Oxford, while also advancing herself socially, by pleasing Mr. Pemberton.

'And you must come and see me, too, Miss Ludford,' she urged; 'we ought to know more of one another. Of course, I should have called on you long ago, but I haven't really been well, you know. I will remedy my omission, however; I shall come to see you one afternoon this very week. You live at . . . ?'

Gladys mentioned her address.

'Very good. You will see me shortly. You are really marvellous, you know, marvellous; such perspective. I never saw anything like it.'

'You are simply too kind,' murmured Gladys, who thought that this indeed must be her Day of Days, so many miracles were happening all at once.

'And you will come to Mapleton, won't you?' asked Mr. Pemberton; 'I hope Mrs. Smith-Parsley will come too—perhaps on Saturday,' he added, as the thought flew through his head that he might as well have one of his periodical social reunions in a few days' time.

'Delighted,' said Mrs. Smith-Parsley; 'you are asking Rupert too, aren't you?' Rupert was her husband's christian name.

'Naturally. You will tell him? Just a few old friends, you know. From Saturday to Monday morning. How will that do?'

'It will be lovely.' This was the first time that Mr. Pemberton had ever asked the Smith-Parsleys over to Mapleton, and such an invitation seemed to indicate developments of a promising character. Already Mrs. Smith-Parsley began to

wonder how much the half, say, of Mr. Pemberton's annual legal work might be worth. But if she knew nothing about perspective, and cared less about artists, she had a cute little mind and was well aware that this invitation was particularly for Miss Ludford. She had been asked only because she happened to be on the spot at this moment. She had a brain-wave. She turned to Gladys—

'Perhaps you will let us take you over, Miss Ludford? Our car can hold four people quite comfortably.'

'I should love to go with you,' Gladys warmly assured her, and spoke as she felt. For how much better that would be than going alone. Indeed, it was not easy to see how she could well go by herself, even to a house party. But now all difficulties had vanished. If she had been inclined to resent Mrs. Smith-Parsley's intrusion a little while before, she was heartily glad of it now, it was really providential.

'Well, that is settled,' said Mr. Pemberton, pleased with the ladies, himself, and all the world. 'We shall see you on Saturday.'

Then he left, accompanied by Mrs. Smith-Parsley.

CHAPTER 3

NOW,' said Arthur, 'this will never do, you know, Maharajah; you can't threaten to beat anybody on this property. You will soon be getting into trouble if you do.'

He said this pleasantly, laughingly, and the short, thin East Indian he addressed nodded his head. He was not angry with Mr. Norris for remonstrating with him; it was done so pleasantly. Besides, Mr. Norris always treated him so very well and was the master. To the East Indian Arthur was a sort of god.

Arthur's eyes travelled from the gloomy face of the man to that of his wife, who stood just outside of the main door of the little house in which she lived. She too was East Indian, tall, slender, very pretty, with the thin nose, black, smooth, glistening hair and fine eyes which the better-favoured women of her race possess and show to such advantage when young. Her full, pouting lips were now compressed in anger, her eyes gleamed as she flashed them from her husband to the squire on his horse. Arthur, beyond his first salutation, had not addressed her; his business was with the man he had jokingly called Maharajah. But the girl was not disposed to be silent or ignored. She broke out:

'There's nothing for him to threaten about, Sahib. He is foolish. He thinks Sampson want to carry on with me, as if I would permit such a thing! And he threaten to beat Sampson and me. If he touch me—' she left the sentence unfinished, but there was menace in her tone. She would not be beaten without indulging in some unpleasant form of retaliation.

She was framed in the doorway of the house, a build-

ing of three rooms all in a row and much superior to the sort of places inhabited by East Indians working on a plantation.

A kitchen garden was laid out to the right and left of it, a carefully-tended garden, with lettuces, tomatoes, radishes, cabbages and other vegetables growing in neat beds; in front of the house itself crotons and plumbago had been planted and a few rose trees. No other place was within a furlong of this one. Behind it stretched a vast background of banana-trees, a background of tapering trunks rising some twelve feet from the ground and topped by hanging plumes of great green leaves, half the length of the trees themselves. In front of the cottage ran a path which a small motor-car could negotiate, and beyond this path, and parallel to it, in the shadow of another forest of bananas which spread out in the opposite direction, flowed a dark-gleaming stream. The scene suggested seclusion.

Arthur felt that he must intervene in this quarrel between man and wife a little further if peace was to be established, and had better include the woman in his conciliatory conversation.

‘Well, Mrs. Ramsingh, I am sure you and your husband have no real reason to be angry with Sampson,’ he remarked in a friendly tone, addressing her directly. ‘Sampson told me about the quarrel only a few minutes ago, and he assured me that he had only been polite to you as his nearest neighbour. There is no harm in that, Maharajah; you, who were born in Jamaica, like your wife, know that everybody here is polite to one another, and that civility to a man’s wife doesn’t mean a thing in the world. However, Sampson says that he will not even bid Mrs. Ramsingh good morning in the future, as you might object. And he will only speak to you when he has to. Both you and he have to work together on Mapleton, you know, and it will never do for you to threaten him. You must keep the peace.’

‘Sahib,’ replied the Indian, slowly, ‘I go my own way an’

mind my own business; but no man must interfere with my wife. She is mine, and I won't have it.'

'I am your wife, but not your slave,' put in the woman sharply. 'And you ought to be ashamed of yourself to think I would carry on with an ordinary brown man. What you think of me?'

'You are to carry on with no man, whether brown or anything else, or ordinary or anything else,' retorted her husband heavily. 'You can leave that to the black and the brown people, an' the w—' he was going to add 'the white people', but checked himself in deference to Arthur's presence. 'If I find you doing it—'

'You talk like a fool!' rapped out the girl, stepping out into the open garden and shaking with anger. 'You always threatening me, an' I won't stand it. This is Jamaica, not India, an' I don't know nothing about India, and I am not there. If you ever beat me, I will leave you, but I will mark you first. Don't think you can do what you like with me!'

Her husband wheeled about to face her, moved to even greater anger by her flaunting defiance of him; but Arthur intervened sharply. 'Haven't I told you, Ramsingh, that Sampson denies having had any intention of taking liberties with your wife? He has only been on Mapleton for two weeks, and here you are, already, trying to have a feud with him! If you continue you will have to go; Mr. Pemberton will see to that. You are not likely to be as well off outside of Mr. Pemberton's employment as you are now.'

The East Indian knew that well. He was a 'time-keeper', on the property, the head of the band of East Indians who worked on Mapleton. He was a good worker, intelligent, active, though of sour, brooding disposition. But Sampson was a good man also and Sampson had been horrified when Ramsingh had threatened to do terrible things to him if he continued to be polite to his wife. Ramsingh had said that if they had been in India, there would have been some person dead already, because of what had

occurred, but as a matter of fact nothing of importance had occurred. Sampson had been badly frightened, for he regarded all East Indians as terrible people, jealous to the verge of madness, ready to use knife and machete in defence of the family honour. He had not the slightest desire to provoke any fight with Ramsingh or any other 'coolie' as he contemptuously described the man; he had merely thought they might behave as ordinary people did. He was done with Ramsingh and his wife. But the East Indian was apparently distrustful of his wife, though proud of her beauty and appearance. His warning threat had been for her even more than for Sampson; he was now warning her again.

'All right, then, Sahib,' he replied, then glancing at the girl as if to ask her why she was lingering there to hear more of the conversation. His look plainly indicated his thought that she should now retire into the house. She interpreted it correctly, but merely tossed her head and continued standing where she was.

She was dressed in white lawn trimmed with red about the neck and sleeves, and over the back of her head was thrown a filmy scarf of red, which framed and set out the beauty of her face. Strung on her bare arms were some bracelets of beautifully worked silver; in her ears silver pendants hung. But her nose had not been pierced for nose-rings, as were those of most other of the East Indian girls about. This accentuated her difference from them.

She wore shoes of a somewhat delicate make, with stockings of artificial silk. Not another East Indian woman on the property wore shoes except on very special occasions, not another was garbed like her; and her carriage, her pose, her look revealed how highly she thought of herself. Like her husband, she had been born in the island. Her father had come over in his youth as an indentured immigrant, had long since served his term of years, had worked hard, saved, acquired some property, and had sent his little daughter to a school where she had been trained much like the daughters

of better-class native farmers. Her parents had been Christianised. She had grown up a Christian, but one Indian custom the father had insisted upon: she had been married to Ramsingh before she left school, married at fourteen, though it was not until she was sixteen that she had been sent to live with her husband. He was twenty-four at the time of this marriage, an advanced age for an East Indian married man. But the fact is that he was a widower when he married this girl; his first wife had died two years before. They had now been married for three years.

The second wedding had been arranged between him and Marie's father—Marie was the Christian name of his wife. She had seen very little of him before her marriage, had had nothing to do with the choosing of him. And this, though she was still influenced by Indian customs and ideas, she secretly resented. She was really the product of two cultures, conflicting cultures. She had made some friends among the girls at the schools she had attended and had imbibed something of their way of thinking and feeling. But her husband, though he too had never been outside of Jamaica, was almost as much of the East in his ideas as his grandfather had been. He held strongly that any woman, especially of a class above the ordinary workers, should seek seclusion and live for her husband only. This view of the proper position of women was buttressed and reinforced by a naturally sour and jealous disposition, and by a comprehensive knowledge of the lax morality prevailing everywhere. He knew he could not insist upon his wife going about veiled, but he wished he could. He knew that female honour among the working classes was not highly regarded in a land of easy sexual relationships, and he was fiercely apprehensive lest anyone should think that in his household there could be any laxity. He had his secret pride. He was of a high caste, the second of the four great castes of India, and therefore held himself to be of consequence among his own people. But Marie's father was still alive, and Marie was well aware that some

day she would be independent of her husband in the matter of money. Her father was devoted to her; there was no other child. Her husband had done very well, had a good situation, earned high wages, but was not in her class financially, and Jamaica was not India. She would not be subservient to him, and she regarded his threats with scorn. The day he laid hands upon her, she would leave him as she had said; she would go back to her father.

'I want you to come with me to Old Dingle farm, Ramsingh,' said Arthur, partly because he wished the man to accompany him, partly because he thought it would be a kindly act to prevent any bitter continuance of the quarrel between him and his wife. 'Get your horse.'

And then, as luck would have it, just as Ramsingh was turning to go to where his horse was kept, the brown man, Sampson, the immediate though innocent cause of the existing marital discontents, rode up.

Sampson had guessed where Mr. Norris was, and wanted to talk with him on some business he had forgotten to mention earlier. He had not paused to reflect that he would be going into Ramsingh's territory. Further, being guiltless of any designs on the Indian's wife, and having made up his mind not even to speak to her in the future, it had not occurred to him that Ramsingh might resent his appearance on the scene just then.

But the East Indian, about to leave the precincts of his place, saw in the sudden advent of Sampson, who was a well set-up, not bad-looking brown man of about thirty years of age, a sinister occurrence. He stopped in his tracks, uttered a short growl, and turned a face dark with hate towards the new-comer. His right arm was jerked upwards with hand clenched, it seemed as though he would bring upon Sampson. Had the latter been on foot, this might have happened. Sampson saw the look, the gesture, and hastily placed himself on the farther side of Arthur and the young East Indian. Marie emitted a provoking little laugh.

The quarrel was by no means over; Arthur saw that now quite clearly. There was danger in the air: Ramsingh meant trouble. Then the solution flashed through his mind. He saw a way out of the difficulty.

Sampson took care not to cast so much as a glance at Marie; he discussed what he had to say with Mr. Norris, then rode quickly back along the way he had come. Arthur now turned to Ramsingh and said peremptorily: 'Get your horse; I want you. I thought I had told you so. What are you waiting for?' And the East Indian, realising that he was neglecting orders, went to mount his animal.

He muttered something to his wife as he passed close to her; she made no rejoinder. When he came back mounted—a matter of five minutes—Arthur spoke.

'I want you, Ramsingh,'—there was no friendly 'Maharajah' now—'to move over to Morley as soon as you can. There is a cottage there, like this; even bigger as a matter of fact; and you can have the ground around it for a garden. You must be prepared to move as soon as you can: early next week, if possible. You can borrow one of the trucks for a day. Meantime I won't have any quarrelling among my uncle's employees. I will tell him later about this arrangement, and he will approve. And there must be no more words with Sampson, or out you go.'

Ramsingh was cowed by Arthur's manner; he knew, too, that Mr. Pemberton might act severely if provoked, although he preferred to humour good workers. And he himself liked this new arrangement; it would take his wife away from the vicinity of the obnoxious Sampson, though it meant the abandonment of the kitchen garden he had made and so carefully cultivated. Morley was the plantation which Mr. Norris managed for his uncle, while at the same time occasionally throwing an eye over Mapleton and Denhurst. Morley was miles away, actually in another parish, Portland. Ramsingh bowed his acquiescence, cast a sullen glance at his wife to see how she took this coming change,

observed only scorn in her countenance, and rode off with Arthur.

It was Saturday. Guests were expected at Mapleton this afternoon for the week-end; they would stay over till Monday morning. Arthur had driven in early this morning; his uncle had asked him to ride over part of Mapleton on the Saturday forenoon, and to suggest what he thought should be done with one or two of the more backward banana farmers. He knew that Mr. Pemberton would not object to his taking Ramsingh to Morley and putting someone else in his place on Mapleton.

The visitors would arrive before tea-time, so he had hours before him. When he parted from Ramsingh, he gave the latter another warning. Ramsingh promised that there would be no further trouble, and meant it.

Having finished his work, Arthur went up to the house for a wash. Then he and Mr. Pemberton sat on a sort of balcony overlooking the eastern expanse of Mapleton and slowly sipped the cocktails which a maid had brought them. Lunch would be served presently.

'The house will be full later on,' remarked Mr. Pemberton. 'The Beavershams are coming, and Dr. Crossley and his wife from Portland, and the two Reamster girls and their brother; and some other people. I hope they'll have a nice time; but you will see to that, Arthur.'

'I'll do my best, sir,' said Arthur.

'You always do, my boy; you are thoroughly dependable. I wonder how some of my friends will take Miss Ludford.'

'I don't see why they should not like her,' Arthur protested. 'You do, I think, and you are as good a judge of a lady as anybody else in this country.'

'I hope so; I think so. But there's Arabella Beaversham; she doesn't know your young friend is coming, and she asked me particularly never to bring them together. The truth is I forgot her injunctions, or I don't think I'd have asked the

Beavershams this time. It can't be helped now, however. Peculiarly stuck-up some people are, aren't they?

'And who are they?' asked Arthur warmly; 'what have they got to be stuck-up about? If you can invite anyone to your house, I am certain that anybody else can do the same. Your example can always be safely followed.'

Mr. Pemberton expanded under this tribute to his social position. This was just what he had been thinking himself. After all, he knew all about Beaversham, and there had been a time, twenty years ago, when he would hardly have thought of having Beaversham to stay with him. Were such people now to set themselves up against his judgment? And the girl was so nice, so stylish, so good-looking, and such an artist. What did it matter what she did for a living, or who she was? Still, he felt a little curious as to who she really was. He voiced his feeling.

'I wonder who she is, Arthur? I mean, who are her family in England, and what is their position? She speaks quite well, she has good manners, and I am sure that if our friends knew more about her they would all accept her. They will in time, of course, but it is because they are in the dark that they are hanging back.'

'She is very frank about it all, Uncle Alfred,' Arthur replied. 'Her father is dead, her mother is alive, her brother died years after the war through some lung trouble as a result of gassing.'

'But what was her father, Arthur, what did he do?'

'I think he was in business of some kind; Gladys says he made quite a nice little pot of money, then foolishly went and invested it in a speculative company and so lost everything.'

'Well, that was his misfortune, not his fault,' commented Mr. Pemberton, inclined to be generous and forgiving as the money lost had not been his. 'But a man who could make a decent bit of money must have been in a good position.'

'Of course he was,' said Arthur positively; 'you have only to look at Gladys to see that she has been well brought up and that her people must have been gentlefolk.'

'No doubt about that,' agreed Mr. Pemberton.

Now Gladys Ludford had spoken the truth when she told Arthur that her father had made some money, then lost it, that her mother was alive and her brother dead. But she had not told him that her father had been a master-tailor employing five or six journeymen, had prospered at his trade, had sent his children to good boarding schools, being a man of ambition, and that it was to the schools that her accent and deportment were mainly due. She too had been ambitious; she had profited much by teaching and example. But the tailor's shop was kept discreetly in the background. After all, why mention anything that might sound unpleasant?

'Gladys went into partnership with another lady after her father's death,' continued Arthur, who could talk with enthusiasm for hours about the girl. 'She had to do something for her living, and she had studied art at a good academy in South Kensington. But the business—much the same as the one she has out here—did not prosper. So she began to think of something else, and as she had heard about the Colonies she thought she would try her luck in Jamaica. The old man had not lost absolutely every penny, you know, there was the house and a few hundred pounds.' (He did not say that there had also been the goodwill of the tailoring business, which had been sold; he knew nothing about that.) 'She has not done badly since she came out, either.'

'I am very glad to hear that,' said Mr. Pemberton. 'Come, let's go into lunch; the bell rang some time ago.'

He rose and cast a long proud look at the scene spread out before them, and Arthur followed his glance with a similar satisfaction. The huge house stood upon a knoll which sloped in front towards a level of green sward, a part of which had been laid out as a tennis court. Between this tennis court and the house was a garden in which bloomed tropical

flowers and coloured shrubs; farther on the ground dipped again, again became flat, then rolled away towards the bank of a broad, shallow river that was silver in the sunlight. Pastures for cattle, pastures with short, sweet grass, were situated on the other side of the river, in them were half-bred Indian cattle, browsing, chewing the cud, standing meditatively, or lying indolently on the ground. The eye travelled farther and lit upon great fields of green, the banana fields with their trees of level height, trees standing like regiments drawn up on parade, rank after rank, until in the distance the vision was lost in a horizon of green and blue.

To the right, a few miles away, rose the hills, and behind these hills were mountains. Verdure clothed them from foot to summit, and over their heads drifted islands of cloud. To the left the land ran unevenly, and there the prevailing cultivation was coconuts, the tall stems of which sprang lightly into the air, topped by drooping yellow-green fronds and bunches of green and yellow nuts, each nut almost as large as a man's head. The sunlight was reflected from the burnished fronds; the sweeping array of these lofty, graceful palms was beautiful to look upon. Green, green and yellow was the prevailing hue of the landscape. The scene was of the tropics at its loveliest if not at its grandest, and there was wealth in these ordered farms and cultivated fields. Mr. Pemberton's eyes gleamed with pleasure. He turned affectionately to his nephew.

'Isn't that something, Arthur? And everything shipshape, and my contracts with the United Fruit Company all satisfactory. Well, my boy, it will be all yours when I am gone.'

'And I hope that that will not be for years and years yet, Uncle Alfred,' replied Arthur sincerely, for his affection for Mr. Pemberton was genuine. 'You treat me very nicely now,' he went on, 'I am in no need of money.'

'There's no reason why you should be,' the other man replied: 'you earn what I pay you, no stranger could look after my properties as you do. I am satisfied with you.'

'Thanks, Uncle Alfred,' said his nephew, clapping him affectionately on the back; 'and now let us go in to lunch.'

'But I want to see you married,' the other man continued, as they walked towards the dining-room, 'you should marry and settle down. You have a fine house at Morley; there's nothing to keep you back.'

'I know, I know,' said Arthur smiling; 'we shall talk about that later.'

Then they sat down to lunch and the conversation turned to something else.

CHAPTER 4

BETWEEN three and four o'clock the guests began to arrive. Tea was to be served in the long front veranda, the windows of which opened on three sides of the house. In the middle of this veranda, looking south, was the covered balcony.

The house was of three storeys, and because of its elevated situation could be seen miles away. On the ground floor were store-rooms, a billiard-room, and various offices; on the upper floor were the drawing-rooms—two—the two dining-rooms, one much smaller than the other, a spacious entrance hall, a library which contained no books, a 'study' in which nobody ever studied, and the veranda already mentioned. The topmost storey contained the bedrooms. There were ten of these, with a bath to each one. To take care of such a large establishment Mr. Pemberton employed a small army of servants, with a very efficient housekeeper to supervise them; he also had half-a-dozen garden-boys. His principal chauffeur was in charge of the garage at the rear of the building, a garage capable of accommodating several motor-cars.

Not only in front of the house was there a garden; at the sides also, and at the back, were gardens; the bedrooms and the tables of Mapleton never lacked for flowers at any time of the year. The gardeners were East Indians, a people particularly clever at horticulture. The rest of the servants were black or brown men and women, the housekeeper herself being a coloured woman who managed the domestics with great efficiency.

Labour is cheap in the tropics, and it was said that Mr. Pemberton netted ten thousand a year from his properties

even when prices were low. He could afford to pay for abundant service.

He liked to entertain. It was a distinction as well as a pleasure to be invited to one of his house-parties. He did you well; the food was of the best, the wine was good, and he took care to let his guests enjoy themselves as they pleased. He did not worry them with ready-made plans which had to be carried out.

The male guests were taken charge of by himself and Arthur as they arrived, the ladies were shown to their several rooms by Mrs. Prince, the housekeeper. The men were asked if they would have a whisky and soda after their long drive, then they went upstairs to wash the dust off their hands and faces. Presently all of them, men and women, came trooping down to tea, and those who did not already know one another were introduced. Gladys was the only real outsider present. She felt a little peculiar, a trifle out of ease, at this exhibition of her unfamiliarity with so many persons of the upper social world. But she had come with the Smith-Parsleys, and that was something.

She was dressed in a skirt of white English spun silk, with broad pleating. Her bodice was quite plain, white, with a V neck. The sleeves of this bodice were short, and over it she wore a light-green coatee with pockets. The bodice was fastened at the top with a beautiful gold brooch. Altogether, her attire was very effective, and she knew it. She knew how to dress.

The guests were grouped around three or four small tea-tables, and it happened that Gladys found herself seated near to Mrs. Beaversham, who regarded this proximity as an impertinence. Mrs. Beaversham was scandalised. It was all very well for Mr. Pemberton to dance with this girl, but to invite her to a house-party—what was happening to the world! And she, Mrs. Beaversham, had warned him that she did not wish to meet Miss Ludford. Could he have forgotten, or had he deliberately ignored her wish?

Gladys sensed—almost anybody would have done so—that Mrs. Beaversham was antagonistic. She had noticed also that Mr. Beaversham had been cold, while Miss Beaversham had been almost rude in the casual manner in which she had bowed when introduced. But Gladys was a young woman out to make her way in the world, and she always endeavoured to break down barriers when these rose in her path. This was a case for another such endeavour.

‘You have a very lovely daughter, Mrs. Beaversham,’ she said, as that lady seriously poured tea into four or five cups.

‘Thanks,’ said Mrs. Beaversham. ‘Do you take two cubes of sugar or only one, Clara?’ she asked Dr. Mayland, ‘I never can remember.’

‘I never take sugar,’ replied Miss Mayland.

‘That is true; so foolish of me to forget.’

She had poured out tea for Gladys, but neglected to ask her whether she took sugar or milk. Still, Gladys would not be discouraged.

‘I have heard so much about you, Mrs. Beaversham,’ she observed; ‘everybody talks about Mr. Beaversham, too; he is a wonderful man.’

‘Thanks,’ said Mrs. Beaversham briefly.

‘When I first saw your daughter—it was at the Constant Spring Hotel—I knew who she was immediately, though you were not with her at the time; she is strikingly like you.’

‘So they say,’ remarked Mrs. Beaversham. ‘Arthur, will you have some more tea?’

‘No, thanks,’ answered Arthur; as a matter of fact he did not want anything from this unpleasant woman. He saw her attitude and knew its reason. So did Miss Mayland.

The latter glanced, with some amusement in her eyes, at Gladys. She was a clever young woman, good-looking herself, and with plenty of brains and a kind disposition. And she had courage. She was not afraid of Mrs. Beaversham, as

so many other persons were. Generally speaking, she was afraid of nobody.

She addressed Gladys.

'You know, Miss Ludford,' she said distinctly, 'I have long been wanting to meet you. I have heard about you; and though I don't understand anything about art, I am glad you have come to Jamaica to do something to encourage it. We really must see more of one another.' This was Miss Mayland's method of easing the situation for Gladys.

Mrs. Smith-Parsley, sitting not far away, overheard the remark. She leant slightly forward in her chair and said: 'There is a treat for all of us in store, though I have enjoyed it already. One of Miss Ludford's pictures is here, and Mr. Pemberton is going to show it to us this afternoon.'

'Indeed?' said Mrs. Beaversham, but felt, nevertheless, slightly interested. She wondered how the picture had got to Mapleton.

'Indeed and indeed, Arabella,' cried Mr. Pemberton, and then she was aware that that gentleman had quietly come up behind her. 'You are going to see a real work of art by a charming artist. If you are all finished tea we might go and look at it now.'

They had finished tea. They were all genuinely intrigued about this work of art. Was it possible, after all, that Miss Ludford, who kept a shop or Art Studio, was a considerable person and really worth cultivating? Some admitted to themselves that her looks spoke for her; had it not been for that confounded shop: but perhaps, after all . . . Expectant and ready to be appreciative, they went into the drawing-room behind Mr. Pemberton.

The picture had been hung by itself on the northern wall. It stood there, a poor thing at best, and not even entirely Gladys's own. But Mr. Pemberton believed in it; Arthur could see only beauty in what Gladys did, and Mrs. Smith-Parsley already had her cue. It was she who struck the first note. 'Isn't it lovely?' she cried, 'such expression!' She would have said

! something about perspective, but thought it was better not to. Some obtuse person might ask her to explain the word.

Mr. Hobbart, a prosperous business man from Kingston, was short-sighted. And vanity kept him from wearing glasses except when at work. He now stared at the picture on the wall, saw it indistinctly, but remembered that a reputation for culture was not to be despised; he thought also that Pemberton was probably as good a judge of these things as anybody else. 'You have said it,' he observed emphatically to Mrs. Smith-Parsley; 'you have said it. The first thing that strikes one about this picture is the expression in those faces; you can see they are feeling something.'

'Deep grief,' suggested Mrs. Smith-Parsley, who recognised that a painting, with anything like death in it, might be symbolical of grief.

'Yes, that's it: deep grief. Poignant suffering.' Mr. Hobbart felt suddenly elevated, proud of himself. He had just found a mighty phrase, one of the sort you read in books. 'Poignant suffering,' he repeated; 'very poignant. Think of the labour entailed in getting that expression into those people's faces. It must have taken you a long time, Miss Ludford.'

Gladys murmured something inaudible.

'It's really very fine,' agreed one of the Reamster girls. 'I have seen pictures like that in the Glasgow National Art Gallery.' She had not; but this observation was about as good as any other. She was getting bored with the picture. But as it was evident that it ought to be admired, she would do her part as an appreciative guest.

'What do you think of it, Arabella?' pointedly asked Mr. Pemberton. He wished Mrs. Beaversham to think well of Gladys and be kind to her. He was satisfied that he was playing admirably the part of the art connoisseur as well as that of host.

'I am no judge,' candidly confessed Mrs. Beaversham, honest in the hope that honesty might be a trifle unpleasant. 'My opinion would be worth nothing.'

'I am sure it is worth a great deal, Mrs. Beaversham,' protested Gladys warmly, but by now the feeling she had for the woman was almost one of hate.

'Thanks,' said Mrs. Beaversham, who, this afternoon, seemed resolved upon eternally expressing to Gladys an inexplicable gratitude.

A few other remarks were passed about the picture, all complimentary. It was probably, for all they knew to the contrary, a good bit of work. Those who had been inclined to be as cold to Gladys as politeness permitted, now thawed, all except the Beavershams. The other Reamster girl, whose name was Lily, and who was given to gushing, assured Gladys that she was marvellous. 'I wish that I had your talent,' cried Lily; 'it must be awfully nice to be able to do things like that: do you play tennis?'

'A little,' smiled Gladys.

'Well, if you can spare an hour or so in the afternoon some time, I wish you'd come and play tennis with us; we live at Harecot in St. Andrew. Won't you?'

'Of course I will—only too pleased.'

'Any Thursday,' said Lily, and rushed off.

Everybody went outside, and Arthur asked Gladys to be his partner at tennis. Mr. Pemberton, and the others who were not playing, disposed themselves on the lawn, standing and sitting, to watch the tennis, of which only one set could be played this afternoon, as the dusk would come on early. He was with Mr. and Mrs. Beaversham, and they were far enough from the others to carry on a conversation in a moderate tone of voice without being overheard. Mrs. Beaversham, with the freedom of an old friend, broached the topic that was uppermost in her mind.

'If I may say so, Alfred, do you think it was quite wise to ask Miss Ludford here, to meet Arthur as a friend of yours?'

'You are vexed that I asked you at the same time, aren't you?' Mr. Pemberton countered. 'But really, Arabella, we must be charitable; there is really nothing wrong with the girl.'

'That is all very well; but, you silly old bachelor, don't you see that you are throwing Arthur and Miss Ludford together?'

'But they knew one another before; you forget that.'

'He had known her for some time, but never thought of mentioning her to you. Why? Because he probably guessed you might not wish him to become too intimate with her. She is not of his class, and he knows it. But now that you have taken her up, why shouldn't he begin to think that if he fell in love with her and asked her to marry him—'

'Arabella! What a woman you are! How you let your imagination run riot. Why, such a thing is out of the question; it has never crossed my mind.'

'I know that,' said Mrs. Beaversham dryly; 'but it will cross the minds of many people. He seems very happy with her now.'

And that was true. Arthur, playing with Gladys for his partner, was laughing joyously, laughing at anything or nothing, through sheer exuberance of spirits. Mrs. Beaversham knew the signs.

Mr. Pemberton stared at the quickly-moving figures of Gladys and his nephew; looked at them in quite a new light. He wanted Arthur to get married, but of course he had never thought of this girl as Arthur's wife. He liked her himself, but he had never pictured her as a member of his family; and if Arthur was going to fall in love with her, as Arabella suggested—why, hang it all, that would never do. Suddenly he felt annoyed. Perhaps he really had been too precipitate. Perhaps he was really to blame. But he knew his annoyance was chiefly with Arthur.

And while he looked at Gladys, Mrs. Beaversham's eyes wandered to where her own daughter was standing. Hazel Beaversham was tall like her mother, full-bosomed, with regular features, and a figure finely proportioned. A really handsome girl. Dark eyes, fine in spite of their insolent expression, looked at you from under a broad, marble-like

brow crowned with heavy unbobbed black hair. In her own way she was as beautiful as Gladys, and there were those who preferred her type of beauty. She was twenty-one. And she was Arthur Norris's social equal, thought Mrs. Beaversham.

Mrs. Beaversham had not yet made up her mind whether she wanted Arthur for Hazel. Indeed, a couple of years ago she would have said no, quite definitely. When Hazel was nineteen, both her father and her mother had desired for her an admiral or a general of the British Service: they were not quite particular which. But, obviously, a young girl could hardly catch an admiral or a general, even supposing that he did happen to come her way. She would probably have to begin with a lieutenant, at the very most a captain, and that meant years of waiting, with the possibility of disappointment at the end. Her elder sister had actually married into a family which the Beavershams liked to think of as being noble; that sister had married the first cousin of a baronet. But the gentleman had not been altogether a success; Mr. Beaversham had been called upon to make a larger yearly allowance to the young couple than he had contemplated. The husband had declined to work, saying to himself, no doubt, that, as death is the end of life, he saw no reason why life should be all labour. Life with him meant no labour; he had not intended that it should mean anything like it when he married Ethel Beaversham. Her father was willing to make them an allowance; all that the young husband asked was that that allowance should be much larger than was originally decided on. He did not consider this unreasonable. He was the cousin of a baronet. Surely that should count for something in the scheme of things.

Mrs. Beaversham had that experience vividly in mind. So, if a young admiral or general should not be possible, why not Arthur? That was the thought that flashed through her mind as she gazed at her stylish daughter across the tennis lawn this afternoon. She would make up her mind later on.

The game was soon over, though it was not yet six o'clock. The party separated itself into little groups according to affinity; dinner was at eight and there was more than an hour available for pastimes or conversation before it would be time to change. Mr. Pemberton, with his eyes now opened by Mrs. Beaversham, observed that Arthur selected Gladys as his "companion for a walk, and saw them stroll in the direction of the river as though they would be apart from everyone. He was conscious of indignation at this. He registered a resolve to give his nephew a hint that he should not let himself be entangled into any understanding with this lady.

'We should invite Arthur to Cripton more than we have done lately,' said Mrs. Beaversham that evening to her husband, when they were dressing for dinner. 'He lives alone in the country, and if his friends don't draw him out he will be doing something ridiculous some day.'

'What I have been thinking myself,' returned Mr. Beaversham. 'It would be a pity if such a promising young fellow were to go astray.'

'He is going astray now,' asserted the wife. 'Haven't you noticed it?'

'Yes; and I heard what you said to Pemberton. That woman is only an adventuress; we ought to protect Arthur.'

'We are going to,' said Mrs. Beaversham, with the air of one about to resort to a crusade for some high and holy object; and Mr. Beaversham himself, rapidly conjuring up a vision of broad and prosperous banana plantations, the property of Mr. Pemberton, felt like a modern St. George about to rescue a male Una from the coils of a designing dragon whose name was Ludford. He was mightily relieved by what his wife had said and done that afternoon. He could read her mind. She seemed about to desert definitely the Army and the Navy and to accept an ordinary civilian as one worthy of admittance into her family. That civilian would be well-off and was of very good family. United with baronets,

or their cousins, he would stand second to none in the land. The only obstacle in the way of this righteous plan was something which described itself as Art, but which surely could be brushed out of existence. Mr. Beaversham determined to take a hand in this work of brushing artistic obstacles out of the way.

'I think,' he said, as he tied his dinner tie, 'we ought to give a dinner party shortly. We should invite everybody that is here, with one exception of course. That would show quite plainly what we think of her.'

'It would sting her to the quick,' smiled Mrs. Beaversham. 'I think that in dealing with a woman like her we should not hesitate.'

'Send out the invitations on Tuesday,' advised Mr. Beaversham.

'But I will mention the party this evening and invite everybody by word of mouth, in her presence,' said Mrs. Beaversham. 'I will ask each of them casually, but leave her out.'

'That might unnecessarily annoy Arthur,' her husband reminded her; 'would it be wise?'

'He isn't engaged to her, is he? If he were we should drop him altogether. Perhaps he isn't even yet very much in love with her. We shall be doing him a kindness to let him see just what the best people think of her. Besides, I am sure Alfred will be grateful to us.'

Mr. Beaversham saw the point of the manœuvre and was satisfied. They both went down to dinner with the feeling that something had been arranged to keep society pure and undefiled, and to save from matrimonial destruction a foolish but potentially wealthy young man.

CHAPTER 5

MORLEY was in a state of confusion. Something untoward was taking place. Soon an authentic fact emerged: the big Mysore bull had escaped. This news, spreading rapidly, created as much consternation as would the report that a lion had been let loose. The Mysore, a recent importation, had proved even more obstreperous and savage than most of his kind; he had absolutely refused to yield to the treatment usually applied to bulls by the native cattlemen; and the small boys of not more than ten or twelve years of age, who had been used to herding cattle and managing them with a supreme indifference to horns or hooves, were puzzled by the behaviour of this beast. These boys could not understand why the bull showed every disposition to gore them when they appeared within striking distance of him, and the older men shook their heads prophetically and prognosticated that no good could come of an animal which exhibited so obnoxious a disposition. They treated him respectfully, prudence compelling, but they had no liking for him. As for the Mysore, he hated them all, even the East Indians, whose complexion and methods reminded him of men he had left behind him in India.

And now he was loose. This wasn't anybody's fault; it was due to his taking it into his head early that morning to leap over the low stone wall that bounded the area of his pasture. Mysore's are good jumpers, and this one was a champion in his way. He had not on any previous occasion exhibited this particular accomplishment, otherwise precautions might have been taken against any attempt on his part to get away. But at about dawn this day, moved doubtless by a desire for freedom and independence, and perhaps wishing to show

that stone walls do not a prison make for Mysore of his description, he had vaulted into the open and stood free, fearless and ferocious, looking about for something to do that should not be of a very pacific character. Finding nothing, he set off in search of adventure. It was just then that the young English bookkeeper at Morley, who had not been in the island for much longer than the bull, happened to pass his way.

The young English bookkeeper, Robinson by name, had no books to keep but was responsible for the observance of law and order on Morley while engaged in learning the mysteries of banana cultivation. He saw the bull and realised that he had no right to be where he was. The bull also perceived the bookkeeper and conceived the idea that he too had no right to be where he was. With such a sharp difference of opinion prevailing, a clash and a conflict might be regarded as certain; in this instance it was the bull that took the initiative. He lowered his massive head with its terrible spreading horns and bellowed; possibly that bellow was intended as a warning. Mr. Robinson regarded it as a challenge; in any case he knew that he would be blamed if the bull committed any damage, and that it was his duty, as the most responsible person present, to see that the bull was driven back to his pen. He was a plucky youth of twenty-two, a public school boy, and though he had heard in a general way from the Negro and East Indian cattlemen that this bull was not as other bulls were, but of a vile and nasty temper, he was satisfied that it would yield to firm but considerate handling administered from a fairly prudent distance. He rather distrusted the reports of the workers, thinking them exaggerated, and he had for the natives and their peculiar emotionalism all the disdain of a new-comer impatient of customs and traditions which, he held, should be swiftly changed to the general advantage. This bull, he felt, could be managed by any really intelligent person. Therefore, picking up a stone that lay at hand, he threw it in the

Mysore's direction, uttering as he did so a loud shout to frighten the animal back into his pen. The only result was a further bellow from the bull and a strange movement of his forelegs, as though the most interesting problem presenting itself to his mind at the moment was whether he could dig a big hole in the ground with his hooves within the next few minutes.

The young Englishman, recognising that no notice had been taken of his stone and his shout, now fired up with determination. Waterloo had been won on the playing fields of Eton, and a youngster who had been a fine cricketer and sprinter on the playing fields of a well-known English public school must surely be able to triumph over and dominate any bull. He picked up another stone, and this time he hurled it straight at the Mysore, advancing at the same time with a firm and conquering demeanour, which progress was brought to a sudden halt as the bull, with one last terrific bellow, charged madly at him.

There was no misunderstanding the bull's intentions. He meant business, and business of a distinctly homicidal type. That young man, in an instant, felt strange and lonely and far from home, alone, all alone in a tropic land, with an infuriated bull bearing down upon him. Waterloo may have been won on the playing fields of Eton, but many a war has been successfully terminated only through strategic retreats effected in the nick of time. This looked like one of those occasions when a retreat was highly advisable, was, indeed, imperative. The bookkeeper turned, and, as the bull surged forward, he sped with lightninglike agility towards the nearest tree.

He heard the thunder of the bull's hooves on the hard ground as the brute dashed forward, he imagined that already he was being lifted into the air by those horrific horns. The tree to which a healthy instinct had directed his flying feet seemed vast distances away, and his startled mind wondered if he could reach that holy and lofty sanctu-

ary in time. But an active, athletic English youth, who has won a reputation for swiftness, may beat even an insolent and man-contemptuous bull; and so young Robinson, almost without knowing it, found himself bestriding the lowest branch of a substantial tree within three seconds of the Mysore's arrival at the foot of that place of refuge; and though the creature promptly dealt the tree's trunk a vicious butt, the effect of the impact merely caused him to recoil in amazement, while the tree stood stock still, not even shaken by the blow.

Here then were the two protagonists in this little drama, the one above, the other below, and for a brief space of time each took a survey of the situation.

Robinson found that his hands were painful and bleeding. This was a tree covered with thorns, long, stout, sharp thorns that had hitherto effectually prevented anyone from ascending it—'a makka tree' the natives called it. And to descend, it seemed that he would have to run the gamut of those thorns once more! Descent, however, was not the immediate problem; so long as the bull remained below there would be no descent. But what added to the horror of the situation was the appearance of great numbers of a particularly vicious black ant which lived on the tree, and which was now curious to make the further acquaintance of this strange being who had intruded himself so suddenly and disturbed the even tenor of an established formiferous home life. The black ant of Jamaica is not poisonous, but its bite is extraordinarily painful. And its ability to penetrate to almost any part of the human person seems proof of great persistence and of a high order of intelligence. A few hundred of these black ants now began a scientific investigation of Robinson, and for one wild and desperate moment he wondered whether it would not be wiser to leap to the earth and make another run for it, than to remain out of the Mysore's reach and endure the torments of the ants.

It was then that a voice came to his ear, a voice from the

other side of a gully which ran through this section of the property, dividing it in two. The voice was that of an old black man, who, standing safe on the farther side of the gully, advised the young master not to attempt to come down.

'Bull bad, massa,' came the unnecessary assurance; 'an' though I know ants bite y'u, it better to perish by the ant dan by de bull.'

Robinson thought bitterly that if he had to perish, a quick death would be preferable; but the old man, after having thus set forth his views upon a choice of deaths, at once became practical.

'Hold on, massa, till I get some of dese children here to stone off de bull,' he shouted, then disappeared.

In a minute or two he had come into view again with what appeared to be members of his family, girls and boys, and these, safe enough from the bull, but near enough to reach him, began with stones and shouts to endeavour to scare him away.

Now the bull knew that Robinson was above, and his particular quarrel just then was with Robinson. But he hated all human beings, and some of these were insulting and annoying him. He forgot Robinson altogether. He made a rush towards the urchins who were flinging stones and rude cries at him. He found he could not come at them; he could not leap that wide gully, he could not climb down one steep side of it and then clamber up the other; he could only bellow his defiance while the stones showered on his head and side. One stone, hitting him sharply near the eye, determined his tactics. He withdrew out of the reach of the missiles, then stood, formidable, waiting for someone to come within his reach. The group of tattered boys and girls now changed their plan; they scrambled down into the gully and scrambled up the other side of it, this bringing them nearer to the Mysore. From this new point of vantage they again began to hurl things at him, and he, believing that

the Lord had delivered them unto his horns, charged swiftly in their direction, only to see them disappear mysteriously from sight. They had simply slipped down the gully's side, with their heads below the level of the bank, knowing that no bull could come at them there. When they appeared again, it was a little further away, and once more the hail of missiles began.

Again there was a rush of the bull towards them, and again they were nowhere to be seen. This disgusted the animal; he came of good fighting stock and he felt nothing but contempt for two-legged creatures who would not come into the open and fight like bulls. With one last defiant bellow he turned away and attacked a couple of banana trees in the vicinity, easily knocking them over with one sweeping movement of his head. This did something to assure him that destruction was still within the possibilities of the morning, and now he trotted off to discover what the world might hold for a bull who was not inclined to be trampled upon by any mortal.

Young Robinson fully realised that he must prevent, if at all possible, that Mysore from effecting any further damage. He was in charge of the situation now even more than he was before, he could never plead ignorance after having been treed by the bull: he was surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. The distance to earth from the branch on which he was perched was not great; he promptly jumped down, landing safely on his feet, and with quick agonised movements proceeded to exterminate as many ants as he could reach without undue exposure. Then he called to some of the young folk and bade them accompany him in his tracking of the bull; two others he despatched to summon some of the cattle-boys. The tracking of the bull was not difficult; he was making no effort to conceal his movements. But while Robinson could easily keep the Mysore in sight, he did not know what else to do just then. His problem, indeed, was mainly to keep himself out of sight of the Mysore, for he was

now in a forest of bananas, and the banana-tree is something which no one can climb.

It did not take a long time now for the scene to become an animated one of excited human beings. The two little boys had shouted as they ran that a mad bull was engaged in goring and otherwise maltreating Massa Robinson, and everybody within hearing, on learning the direction of the interesting spectacle thus advertised, had rushed off to see how Massa Robinson was standing the ordeal, with, of course, every intention of lending a rescuing hand. Some of these, appearing directly in the path of the bull, found it advisable to fly for their lives, the gloom of the banana forest greatly favouring them. Two cattlemen, scornfully cursing the bull, ran towards him, only to find that he in his turn rushed still more boldly towards them, thus compelling a wild movement on their part in diagonal directions. The bull now seemed more resolved upon scaring people out of his way than on inflicting any actual personal injury. The banana-trees greatly impeded his movements; his charges were carried to no completion; when his antagonists had put some space between him and them, he paused and resumed his progress. He did not know exactly where he was going, but he seemed determined to get there. He was taking a line that led to Ramsingh's cottage.

Arthur had hitherto heard nothing of all this noise. The Great House of Morley, in which he lived, was some distance away from the spot where young Robinson had encountered the Mysore, and this morning he was preparing to ride with Sampson over a part of Morley, to inspect a patch of bananas affected with 'Panama Disease'. Sampson was in a responsible position at Mapleton, where it was important that 'Panama Disease' should not break out, and Arthur wanted Sampson's help. The brown man had driven over in a Ford, neither he nor Arthur, of course, giving a thought to Ramsingh, whose removal from Mapleton had taken place three weeks before. They were riding towards

Ramsingh's cottage at about the same time that the Mysore, feeling much bucked up with having scattered so many enemies in a wild disarray, emerged into the open ground that fronted the coolie village of Morley.

And then, from many directions, came people and more people: those who had first heard of these strange and unusual events, and those who had fled, and those who were suddenly apprised of them. It was an arena with a green setting of banana-trees on three sides, and, on the fourth, the village with its huts and its one wooden cottage of superior description. The bull paused as he came to the edge of this arena, his head carried high and proud, his mighty horns standing out sharp and cruel, his eyes alight with the flame of battle. He saw, to his right, two horsemen; he saw, all about, scores of black and bronzed and brown people gesticulating and shouting; and, as fate would have it, he saw Ramsingh, who had hurried into the open on hearing the sound of this extraordinary tumult.

Ramsingh, in his capacity of 'timekeeper', or man in charge of a gang of workers, had been scandalised by what seemed to be a lack of discipline; he imagined a fight. In just one second he realised that, for him, it was going to be a flight. For he was clothed in a simple pair of trousers and a scarlet shirt; which, flaming scarlet looked very picturesque on occasions amidst the dark green of the bananas. But bulls have a deep-rooted antipathy to red; and our Mysore was no exception to the rule. He perceived in Ramsingh's brilliant apparel a deliberate injury and insult, and he was no more able to prevent himself from hurling his vast bulk towards that flaunting, incarnadine insolence than a shell can stop itself from flashing out of a cannon's mouth when the expelling lever is pulled. It was all in a flash of the eye—the terror-stricken East Indian turning to flee, the bull dashing forward intent upon goring the poor wretch to death, and Arthur's swift, instinctive spurring of his horse towards the infuriated brute. Arthur had taken in the situation at a

glance; he would strike the bull on the head with his heavy riding-crop and so divert his attention; the animal would charge him, but his horse could easily outdistance the bull, and, besides, the cowboys about could be trusted to capture the creature. But Arthur was no trained bull-fighter; he miscalculated the rush of the bull and the speed of his horse. He did get in between Ramsingh and the Mysore, but only to feel the horse he rode almost lifted off the ground as the Mysore's horns ripped into its side, and then horse and he were flung heavily to the earth.

And now it was pandemonium. The Negro workers shrieked their consternation, the less demonstrative East Indians cried out also; a dozen black men rushed forward, two with upraised machetes, but the Mysore had already drawn back for another blow, and it seemed that Arthur could not possibly escape.

Then it was that the brown man Sampson proved again the resourcefulness which had made him so valuable a servant. He too had spurred his horse towards the bull, accompanying Arthur, and the moment the catastrophe occurred he grasped what had to be done to prevent a dreadful tragedy. In an instant he had torn from his back the blue-black jacket he wore, and, sharply pulling up at the bull's side when the creature was preparing to drive his horns into the struggling mass before him, he flung the dark cloth over his head, thus completely blinding him for a second or two.

Startled by this sudden, inexplicable eclipse, the Mysore gave way to panic. He forgot everything save a compelling desire to rid himself of the blackness that had descended upon him. He swerved; forgetful of man and horse on the ground, he dashed away, scattering the people in his path; in a trice he was thrusting through the bananas, his head quite free from the jacket, which he had tossed off as he swerved, but his sudden fright persisting. It had been touch and go, but the momentary blinding of the bull had saved the situation. Young Robinson, shouting to some of the cowmen to follow

him, started off again in pursuit of the animal, and Sampson dismounted and hurried to see whether Mr. Norris was hurt.

He was not. Arthur was an excellent horseman, he had managed to swing his leg free and upwards when his horse went crashing to the ground, and though he had inevitably fallen with it, the earth about here was spongy, hence he had sustained a few slight bruises only. But the horse was badly gored; it was clear that the most merciful thing to do was to shoot it. Arthur, however, had been shaken; so Sampson insisted upon his going into the nearest house for a glass of liquor, if procurable, and to see if any serious injuries had been inflicted on him. Sampson, who genuinely feared Ramsingh, because he believed the East Indian to be capable of terrible things, did not because of this hesitate to lead Arthur into the best cottage of the neighbourhood, which happened to be Ramsingh's house. But Ramsingh, himself was profuse in his solicitations that the Sahib should enter and make himself comfortable, and he showed no objection whatever to Sampson. Ramsingh was only too well aware how narrowly he had just escaped death.

'There's nothing the matter with me,' Arthur assured Sampson; 'I'll be all right in a few minutes. Has anyone gone after the bull?'

A voice informed him that young Robinson had.

'I hope he'll be careful. My uncle would be mad if anything happened to that Mysore; it cost a lot of money. You had better get a gun and shoot my poor horse, Sampson; try and kill him with one shot.'

'I'll send up to the house for a gun,' said Sampson; but Ramsingh announced that he possessed a gun which he thought would do quite well. Sampson glanced at him as if saying to himself that an East Indian who could threaten others so bitterly and who also had a gun must be even more dangerous than he had thought. But he took the gun and soon the horse was out of its agony. Some of the labourers were ordered to take away the carcase and bury it.

CHAPTER 5

'SAHIB, you not hurt?'

'Arthur noticed for the first time that Marie Ramsingh was in the room and looking at him anxiously; he smiled an acknowledgment of her presence, and, for an answer, rose out of the easy chair in which he had been deposited and shook himself.

'You see?' he said.

'Thank God, Sahib,' said Ramsingh. 'If it wasn't for you, what would have happened to me?'

'And if it wasn't for Mr. Sampson I might now be in a warmer place than Jamaica,' said Arthur lightly. He was rather embarrassed at this direct reference to his saving of the East Indian's life.

'Mr. Sampson was great,' admitted Ramsingh, turning to Sampson. He was as cordial now as his disposition permitted.

'Well, we shall have to go about our business, Sampson,' said Arthur, 'and then we shall go back to the Great House and eat what canned things that fool girl can give us. Sorry I won't be able to offer you a decent lunch today.'

'I hear your cook leave you, Sahib,' remarked Marie Ramsingh as Arthur prepared to leave.

'No; she is only sick; it is my butler who has left: gone to Kingston, as all of them like to do. So I am in a hole till I get a new butler and my cook gets better.'

'Sahib,' broke in Ramsingh diffidently, 'if you will excuse the liberty, Marie is a good cook—'

'Surely you are not offering me her services!' laughed the young man. 'Fancy your wife the cook at the Great House!'

'What I was going to say, Sahib, was that if you would so

condescend, Marie could cook some lunch for you here, and you could eat it when you riding back this way, if you don't mind. She can do a nice curry and other things.'

Arthur grasped that Ramsingh wished to make some sort of return, to show his gratitude for having been saved from the bull, and he did not want to hurt the East Indian's feelings by refusing his hospitality.

'But it is not I alone,' he pointed out; 'there is also Mr. Sampson, and two are a large order, Maharajah.'

'Mr. Sampson will be very welcome,' said Ramsingh; 'but it was for you to invite him, Sahib.' A remark which showed than Ramsingh appreciated the wide social difference between his employer and his employer's assistant.

'Very well, then, we accept,' said Arthur heartily. 'We shall be back about one o'clock,' and Marie smiled brightly to show how pleased she was that her husband's hospitality would be accepted.

'Why do they call you Sahib, Mr. Norris?' asked Sampson as they rode away, a new horse having been brought for Arthur. 'The coolies here don't use that expression as a rule.'

'They are many cuts above the ordinary coolies, Sampson, so I suppose they like to use words that are Indian.'

'You don't suppose that Ramsingh will take this opportunity of poisoning me, do you?' asked Sampson jestingly. 'I never imagined that I should ever enter his house, and I never wanted to.'

'He has probably got over his stupid jealousy by this,' said Arthur. 'Perhaps it is natural for a man in his position to be very jealous. His wife is certainly very pretty and has nice ways.'

'Like a cat,' observed Sampson. 'She is soft and sleek and lovely, but she can spit and snarl and use her claws, I have no doubt. They are a dangerous pair.'

'Your analysis and vehemence show an extraordinary interest in the lady, Sampson,' teased Arthur. 'You protest too much.'

'God keep me out of their way!' exclaimed Sampson earnestly, but after the forenoon's work was over and they got back to Ramsingh's cottage, he stealthily watched the girl as she went about her preparations at the table. And he noticed that his simile of a cat was remarkably just.

The table was laid for two, for of course the East Indians could not lunch with the two men, and even Sampson sat at table with Arthur Norris by special courtesy. Arthur was the master, the others were his servants (or the servants of his uncle), in different grades of employment. Marie had been cook; now she was butleress, with the help of her husband, who had gone out to his work but had returned in time to do honour to Mr. Norris. The East Indian was obviously proud to have such a guest as Mr. Norris, if only for once in his life; he was an ambitious young man and this event would place him still higher than he stood in the opinion of the East Indians and Negroes on the plantation. The soup was tasteful, the chicken curry was wonderful, and some whisky had been provided. Arthur thought he had never enjoyed a meal so much for weeks. It was like a picnic, he said. And this reminded him of something he had been dwelling upon in his mind for quite a while.

He had planned only the other day to give a picnic at Morley, for some of his friends ostensibly, but really for Gladys. The sickness of his cook and the defection of his butler had made the realisation of his plan for the present impossible. But seeing how well Ramsingh and his wife could cater, it came into his head that they might help him in his difficulty. He broached the subject.

'Look here, Ramsingh, perhaps you could do something for me,' he began, and the East Indian's face manifested interest.

'I want to have some friends come to spend a day at Morley, and dine there, but I can't do it with two of my

house people lacking. Do you think that you and your wife, who seems to be able to do everything, could take charge of the arrangements? Both of you would only supervise of course; you could choose your own assistants; but I must have a couple of people I can depend upon.'

'We should be very pleased an' proud, Sahib,' said Ramsingh, his face reflecting the pleasure he felt. 'We will do our best.'

His belief in the semi-isolation of a wife was entirely gone out of his mind at the moment; but then it had been coupled with the proximity of other East Indians and with brown men, never with folk like Mr. Norris and his friends. These were in a world apart, and Ramsingh would have been bitterly angered had his wife declined to accept this offer. It meant good money, too, and he loved money. It was a great passion of his life.

'That's fine,' said Arthur; 'you come up to the house tonight and we'll talk it over.'

He left the cottage feeling much happier than before; he would be able to have Gladys at Morley, after all, and with some nice people. He had been through some nasty hours and days in the last four weeks. First of all, there had been that invitation of Mrs. Beaversham to everybody except Gladys; and after that there had been one little scene, quiet and apparently insignificant enough, but it had opened his eyes to his uncle's attitude towards him in connexion with the girl. He recalled it now, as he had recalled it often of late. After the dinner at Mapleton (at which, by some rearrangement of the seating without his knowledge, Gladys had not been placed near him) they had gone for a walk and he had chosen a spot at some distance away from the house, where they could sit and talk undisturbed. It was a little clearing, shut out of view from the building by rows of Royal Palms, but open to the sight of the fields below and the glistening river.

The moon had risen, a great orb that lightened the land-

scape almost with the brilliance of sunlight; it rode high and it touched with the gold and glow of romance that silent, wide expanse of green that flowed away to rise in the far distance into low hills, from the heights of which twinkled lights from other residences like Mapleton. There was a garden bench beneath the Royal Palms, and on this they sat, Arthur rendered bolder than usual by wine, Gladys somewhat quiet and subdued.

'At last we are alone, Glad,' he said, as they sat down, 'and away from all the others. They can't overhear a word we say to one another. You don't know how disappointed I was that you didn't sit beside me at dinner; it was that idiot, Brown, who must have changed your seat.'

Gladys shook her head slowly: 'Are you sure it was Brown?' she asked.

'Who else could it have been?'

She had a shrewd suspicion. She was sensitive to changes in the social atmosphere; she had not failed to feel that, in some way, Mr. Pemberton was different. His manner, while still eminently polite, had become just a suspicion colder, a bit more constrained; he was not hearty and enthusiastic any more. She had had her experiences; she knew that someone must have been talking about her depreciatingly—indeed she guessed who it was. Perhaps she ought to have expected something like this; life had already taught her that great joy is often followed by depression, that a triumph sometimes ends in something like defeat. She had been uplifted during the whole of the previous week, and especially that afternoon; then had come the chill of Mr. Pemberton's manner and her inevitable reaction to it. And there had been something worse.

'Mrs. Beaversham is giving a dinner shortly,' she said, as if changing the subject Arthur had introduced.

'So she told me; she has invited everybody here.'

'Everybody except me, Arthur.'

'Except you? But that is impossible. I would have noticed—'

'You forget that just before we came out here you went to send a maid upstairs to get my wrap? Well, it was then she gave her invitation, and she only spoke to you about it when you came back. I was ignored before everybody, and it was purposely done. I am not classy enough for her, you see; and perhaps she has other reasons.'

'Her reasons be damned!' exploded Arthur. 'Well. I am not going to her dinner. You would think the woman was somebody—you would think that a lot of people here were important, they have such an infernal cheek. Anyhow, if she won't have you she won't have me, and that's all there is to it.'

'But why should you do this?' she asked, really touched. Here at least was one who was true and faithful.

'You know as well as I do, Gladys; it is because I love you.'

'What's the use?' she asked pathetically.

'Every use. I am asking you to marry me, Gladys, and I will tell my uncle about it this very night. I will tell everybody, if you accept me. And you will, won't you, dear? You know I love you. You are so wonderful—'

'Every girl is wonderful when a man is infatuated with her,' she laughed, somewhat bitterly. 'But you see, my dear boy, your uncle would have a different opinion from yours, and where would you be then?'

'Uncle Alfred? Why, Gladys, he would be delighted; he thinks the world of you.'

'As an acquaintance or even a friend, perhaps, as someone he can be nice to without caring who likes it, for he has nothing to lose. But as niece? No, Arthur. He is not the same towards me tonight as he was this morning; I have seen that. I am a woman, and I have an instinctive feeling of such things. It is all right, I suppose; I must expect it. I have no position, I have to work for my living; I am nobody among

these people—though, so far as I can see, they would be less than nobody in England.’ She tilted her head upwards, anger dominating her. Her fighting spirit was stirred. She was English, and, whatever her social origin, she refused to consider herself inferior to any Colonial. She would let Arthur at least know that.

‘You are perfectly right, Gladys,’ he cried with an indignation equal to her own; ‘but why do you worry yourself to think of them? I am sure you are wrong about my uncle; only today he was speaking in the nicest terms about you. But even if you are right, even if he has changed, what need that matter? I can always earn my own living. Marry me, and, if he is annoyed, leave him to get over his annoyance or to continue in it; we can get along pretty well without him. You have confidence in me, haven’t you?’

‘Why, of course, Arthur, but—’

‘But what?’

‘It is all very well for you to talk about not caring what your uncle might do; you may feel that way now, but how would you feel if you lost everything? You would hate me!’

‘Gladys!’

‘You would miss your position, and you would find how difficult it was to serve under any other man, with no prospect of a fortune at the end. You would be poor too, Arthur, and I am sick of poverty. I couldn’t stand it out here.’

She was talking now as she never would have talked in a moment of calmness: for the time she had thrown discretion to the winds. Restraint was relaxed. Out of the bitterness of her heart the truth came surging.

‘It is different in England. There one fits in with one’s class and circumstances; here there are very few people of any consequence, and I want to be one of those few. If you had nothing but a salary, what could you and I do with it? You would be miserable, and I would be miserable, and we

should both be nothing at all. I couldn't face that, and I don't think you could. It is better to go on keeping a shop for a while.'

'I suppose you don't love me, Gladys?'

'I don't know that I love anybody. But I like you immensely, Arthur; you have been very nice to me, and you are a gentleman. No; I suppose I don't love you, or I might be inclined to make a fool of myself, and a fool of you too. But I am not going to.'

'I should be sorry to think you are mercenary, Gladys.'

'Mercenary? I don't think I am. But I want to have a good time, and I don't want to remain a nobody, and if I have to work all the days of my life, at any rate it won't be for a whole household of children with a future worse than my own present. You are shocked, Arthur? But what's the sense of talking poetry when everything is pure prose?'

He was shocked, for there was a romantic streak in his composition. Gladys cared more for money and position than she did for him and his devotion! This was a revelation that startled him. She was applying business principles to love and marriage.

'If my uncle had no objection, you would have none, I imagine.' He said this with some sarcasm.

'I have told you that I like you, Arthur, like you very much; I can't tell you what I should do if circumstances were different. I don't know. And you don't know either what you would do if your uncle made it clear that he would disown you if you married me. You really believe that he would do nothing of the kind and so are willing to take the risk. I am not. I cannot. We should both be laughed at, and—and—Oh, what's the use of talking about it! I am sick of everything. I am sick of life. But some day I may get even with all the people who pretend to think they are better than I; some day I too may be able to look at them as if they didn't exist. The swine!'

Arthur would have said something more, but just then

there was a sound of footsteps and voices; some people were coming their way. It was Mr. Beaversham and Mr. Pemberton. Mr. Beaversham knew Mapleton pretty well; he had observed the direction taken some time before by Arthur and Gladys, and his shrewd mind had guessed that Arthur, if at all in love with the young woman, might propose to her on such a beautiful night, when the effect of moonlight, distant gleaming water, wandering cool winds and champagne would move even the most phlegmatic man to the adoration of a really lovely girl. This would be embarrassing, if not positively disastrous. As soon as he conveniently could therefore, having in mind the crusade to which he had set himself, he suggested a walk to his host and led him in the direction taken by the younger people. And now, there they were, sitting by themselves, away from every other guest.

'Hello,' he cried out cheerfully, 'Arthur and—er—Miss Ludford. Enjoying the moonlight?'

Mr. Pemberton said nothing, but glanced at his nephew and Gladys. Gladys had quickly got her feelings under control, but Arthur's face showed strong emotion. Mr. Pemberton leaped to the conclusion that Arthur had been making love to the girl; that Arabella Beaversham was right. Again a spasm of anger shot through him; he was bitterly resentful of his nephew's conduct. What a fool the boy was making of himself! He said nothing; he could not forget that he was their host. But even Arthur perceived that all was not well with his uncle: he knew from of old the expression which now appeared on the older man's face.

Mr. Beaversham and Mr. Pemberton continued their walk; there was silence between the younger people until the others had passed out of earshot.

'You see, I am right,' said Gladys.

Arthur did not reply, but his heart was heavy. And he realised with surprise that Gladys had seen much farther than he did; he realised that, with his uncle plainly dis-

pleased with him, he could not now urge an engagement on the girl. He did not wish, after all, to bring about an estrangement between his uncle and himself. Was he, then, despicable, was he himself mercenary, was he putting his prospects above his love, counting the Pemberton properties of greater value than Gladys? He resented this suggestion; he concluded that he was only showing prudence, a willingness to bide his time until his uncle should come to see Gladys as he did, and be willing to welcome her as his niece. That could not be long, he assured himself. Yet somehow he did not feel very proud of himself.

'I know Uncle Arthur better than you do, Glad,' he said at length, a little lamely; 'you leave him to me. You are not going to drop me because you think he mightn't want you to marry me, are you?'

'Oh, no, my dear,' she answered; 'that would be foolish. I will drop neither you nor him, if he is still inclined to be friendly. Why should I?'

'That's good, and everything will work out right; you wait and see. I have a feeling that it will.'

'We all have that feeling when it suits us,' she replied, rather sadly.

'Wait and see. And I am not going to accept Mrs. Beaver-sham's invitation.'

'I am glad of that,' admitted Gladys frankly. 'You can't be too nasty to those people, if you want to please me.'

'I shall be as nasty as I know how,' he declared. 'I hate them.'

She smiled satisfaction, and his arm stole round her waist. He was leaning towards her, his face close to hers. Well, why not? There was no one to see, and he loved her and had always and probably would always be nice to her. He was a good fellow. She liked him immensely. What did a kiss matter?

Nothing much to her, perhaps, but he remembered it now, as he had so frequently done since that night, and also

the kisses that followed. He had not gone to the Beaversham dinner; but an invitation to a second one had come, and this time his uncle himself had asked him, very nicely, to accept it. 'What's the use of slighting old friends, my boy?' Mr. Pemberton had said.

'I do!n't like my real friends to be publicly insulted,' Arthur had replied with spirit.

'You mean Miss Ludford? It was a nasty thing for Arabella to do, I admit that,' agreed Mr. Pemberton; 'but you know what a catty disposition she has. We can show what we think of Miss Ludford by inviting her again to Mapleton.'

'You mean that, Uncle Alfred?' asked Arthur suspiciously.

'Of course; but you mustn't make a fool of yourself over her, Arthur. That is all I ask. If you want to marry—and I think you should—why not propose to a girl like Hazel? She would suit you down to the ground.'

'Mrs. Beaversham has been suggesting that to you,' said Arthur positively. 'Well, I don't care for the girl, and that is that.'

'But you'll go to this dinner with me?'

'Yes; and I shall give a picnic at Morley afterwards and ask Gladys,' said Arthur defiantly.

'I shall be glad to come too,' remarked Mr. Pemberton with great cordiality: 'will you ask the Beavershams?'

'No.'

'Relent a little, Arthur; ask Hazel at least, for my sake. You must think of your old uncle sometimes. Leave Arabella and her husband out if you like—that man always reminds me of a fox, though he has never been able to get the better of *me*. He is really a crook at heart, and in practice whenever it is safe. But the girl is nice, and we can't go to people's houses without being hospitable to them in turn. You will invite Hazel?'

Arthur knew that this request was almost a command; his uncle would resent refusal. He agreed: and then had

come the domestic dislocation at Morley: with butler and cook away there could be no adequate catering. But Providence had now intervened, in the form at first of a furious Mysore bull, and then in the form of a grateful but usually morose East Indian. Still, wonders might be performed in a mysterious way, and anyhow his path was now clear. That very afternoon he would send out the invitations. This was Monday. He would invite his guests for the following Sunday.

CHAPTER 7

ARTHUR was satisfied that his lunch was a great success; everybody was in a jolly mood, his uncle particularly so. The one fly in the amber was Mrs. Beaversham, who had not been invited but who had come along with Hazel, explaining on her arrival that she took the liberty, as an old friend, and as a woman almost old enough to be Arthur's mother, to accompany her daughter. In addition, she pointed out, it would hardly have been possible for Hazel to have come alone. Arthur cordially agreed, and made excuses for not having invited her, declaring he had thought she would not have cared to travel all that distance to his ill-equipped place, and so forth. The truth is, of course, that he had hoped Hazel would refuse the invitation, and that he did not want to see Mrs. Beaversham within fifty miles of Morley.

But here she was, and she did not tell him it was Mr. Pemberton who had secretly pressed her to come, under promise that she would say nothing about his intervention.

Mr. Pemberton had whispered to Arthur, just before lunch:

'This is an informal business, my boy, so I wouldn't trouble, if I were you, about any regular seating of your guests. Let Arabella sit where she likes, but put Hazel beside you. I will look after Miss Ludford.' And though Arthur would have preferred to have Gladys beside him, he was pleased to see his uncle ready to be nice and cordial to her; he was sure that if these two only came sufficiently together, Mr. Pemberton would speedily lose any objections he might have to Gladys, objections purely silly and snobbish, which

would be dispelled by closer acquaintanceship with the wonderful qualities of the girl.

Maharajah presided over the three boys who served at table, watching with vigilant eyes to see that they acquitted themselves well. Now and then his wife also slipped into the dining-room to see if things were going as they should, her husband being really a novice in the art of a majordomo. On one of her appearances, still wearing the scarlet head-dress she affected, Hazel caught sight of her. She asked Arthur:

'Who is that pretty coolie girl you have here, Arthur? She is very striking.'

'She is the wife of the man over there who has taken charge of my bachelor establishment for the present,' Arthur explained. 'But for them I couldn't have had you at Morley today, which is my chief reason for gratitude to them.'

'A very pretty speech,' flashed back Hazel; 'only it isn't meant. What you really mean is that but for the help of the coolie and his wife you couldn't have had Miss Ludford over here.'

'Meow, meow,' laughed Arthur, and the man sitting on the other side of Hazel, who had overheard the remark, laughed also.

'Oh, I am catty enough,' admitted Hazel with great calm. 'Cattiness is only another name for truthfulness, you know. Don't you think I know why you didn't come to the dinner we gave after spending the week-end at Mapleton?'

'Do you think your mater acted nicely in inviting everybody and pointedly ignoring one poor little lady, and a stranger at that?'

'I don't, Arthur; I didn't like it'—which was not true—'but you don't want to quarrel with old friends for new acquaintances, do you? Besides, I counted upon your coming to that dinner, and you didn't.'

'I came to the next one.'

'Only through politeness, frigid politeness. And you and I

used to be such good friends once! However, that is the way of the world, I suppose.'

'You know such a lot about the world, don't you, Hazel? You are aged and worldly-wise, quite burdened with experience.'

'I am not quite a fool, my dear; that's all, and when I see a young fellow, an old friend, not caring for his old play-mates any more, and I see a pretty girl in the offing, or rather nearer—why, I put two and two together and make it—'

'Five,' said Arthur. 'You would, you know, Hazel.'

'Nonsense, you are not going to tell me you are not in love with her?' (This was said in a tone intended for his ear alone; instinctively both had lowered their voices as the conversation continued.)

'I like her very much, if that is what you mean,' he replied, somewhat embarrassed; 'but then I like you also, Hazel.'

'Humph; I used to think you did, but I am not so sure about that now. I am on the discard, Arthur.'

Damn it, he thought, did girls not mind in the least what they said? He had never seen Hazel so much like her mother before, her mother who spoke what was in her mind, and even more, as though she were licensed as a superior person to have her say regardless of the feelings of anybody else. Hazel, evidently, had the same characteristics. A queen could not have been more self-confident. He knew, too, he must be careful as to what he said to her about Gladys. She would not hesitate to repeat it to everyone.

'What are we going to do after lunch?' she asked suddenly.

'Those who want to go rafting on the Rio Grande can do so; I have arranged for some rafts. Those who want to play tennis may; those who want to drive about the parish, if they have never yet been over it, will find that I have provided guides. And so on. What do you want to do, Hazel?'

'I'd like to go rafting; I have never been. Will you take me?'

'With pleasure.'

'How is it arranged'—but she already knew.

'Two on a raft, and the punter, a native, stands up and steers the contraption down the river, and if there is an upset I shall have to swim to the bank with you.'

'And save my life! Most romantic, Arthur; so I wish that an upset may happen. Of course I can swim, but I wouldn't in the circumstances. I will let you play the rescuing hero,' she laughed.

Other couples and groups were busy making their arrangements for the afternoon. Arthur would have liked to have Gladys as his partner on the raft; but he knew it would not do for him to devote his attention too exclusively to her; it was much as it was to have her there, and it was pleasing to observe that she was getting on extremely well with the other guests. She was accepted by them—that was evident. She had not slipped back socially in spite of Mrs. Beaversham's obvious effort to push her backwards and keep her there. And Mr. Pemberton was making up for any previous momentary coldness he may have shown her; he was now all attention to her. Better so, thought Arthur, than that he himself should be with Gladys all this day; it was more important that the old man should be pleased with her. Viewing the situation in this shrewd and diplomatic light, Arthur felt quite contented. And next to Gladys, of all his guests he would prefer to go rafting with Hazel. She was an old girl friend, after all, and she was vivacious, she was pretty. 'I am going to enjoy this trip with you very much,' he assured her as they rose from the table, and his look was bright and sincere.

'I hope so,' she answered, flushing with pleasure; for Hazel objected to Gladys, was jealous of her as far as her insolent and imperious nature would allow her to feel conscious jealousy of any woman of her acquaintance, and had quietly made up her mind to take Arthur away from Gladys. It was now a trinity of the Beavershams that was united against the

artist. And the most formidable person of this trinity was Hazel.

She walked over to where Mr. Pemberton and Gladys stood, waiting to follow some other persons out to the back porch. She smiled quite pleasantly at Gladys, a friendly, happy smile. 'Uncle Alfred,' she cried—she always called him that—'Arthur has asked me to go rafting with him, and he has promised that if the raft upsets he will see that I do not drown.'

'Don't you swim?' asked Gladys directly, knowing perfectly well that the information just given was intended for her.

Hazel pretended not to hear, and Mr. Pemberton took up the thread of the brief conversation.

'And I,' he remarked, 'have just arranged to take Miss Ludford over to Port Antonio and show her the place. Then we are going to the Titchfield Hotel for tea, and afterwards coming back to Morley. I hope to give Miss Ludford a good impression of Portland, though no doubt it would be nicer for her if a younger man could take her about.'

'You are fishing,' protested Gladys. 'You know how pleased I was when you suggested this treat. I didn't guess you were so vain.'

'Vain as a peacock,' gibed Hazel, shaking her head reprovingly at Mr. Pemberton, but with appreciation nevertheless. She knew that Mr. Pemberton had definitely fixed matters so that Arthur should not be Gladys's companion that day, and she welcomed this manoeuvre. She had heard something from her mother of Mr. Pemberton's irrevocable objection to Arthur and Gladys being anything more than ordinary friends. She realised that if the old man were going to take an active part in keeping Arthur and the girl shop-keeper (as she thought of Gladys) apart, there wasn't very much chance for Gladys, especially as she, Hazel, had now definitely made up her mind to have Arthur as chief and indeed as only string to her bow.

Hazel ran back to Arthur, putting her arm through his with an air of proprietorship.

'Your uncle,' she said, 'is looking after Miss Ludford, and she appears to be delighted with the arrangement. Perhaps you have a rival in him, Arthur,' she added.

Both of them, knowing how snobbish and vain was Mr. Pemberton, laughed in unison.

'If ever there was a confirmed bachelor, he is Uncle Alfred,' answered Arthur; then paused for a moment in his walk to the porch on seeing that Marie Ramsingh evidently wanted to speak to him.

'Everything all right, Sahib?' she asked quietly, glancing piercingly at Hazel, who was scanning her with frank admiration.

'Perfectly, Marie,' said Arthur, dropping unconsciously into a more familiar form of address than he had hitherto employed. He saw now that Marie had got up herself especially for this occasion, and rather too much so perhaps. Polished silver bangles glowed on her arms, and her head-dress was fastened with a golden pin. She had evidently wanted to attract attention; she had succeeded too, for some of the younger men had been inquiring about her, and more than one of the ladies had observed her particularly. She was aware of it. And she was proud of it. Now she wished for a word of commendation from the master of the house himself.

'We have put up thermos flasks with tea an' punch, and parcels of sandwiches,' she explained. 'Ramsingh is putting them in the cars now. But tea will also be here, ready, if anybody come back. And dinner will be better than lunch: you will see.'

'You are a treasure, Marie,' commended Arthur, 'you and the Maharajah. I couldn't have done without you both.'

He moved away then, and again Marie looked searchingly at Hazel. This young lady, she thought, had taken possession of Mr. Norris; she hung on his arm as though he were hers.

Marie saw intention in Hazel's look, in her air. She wondered: was this tall, dark, handsome girl to be the mistress of Morley?

The party began to go off in twos and threes and fours, except a quartette who had made up their minds to stay in the house and play bridge. Mr. Pemberton settled comfortably in his big car with Gladys at his side. His chauffeur knew every mile of the parish; the drive would be an interesting one. He felt animated, happy, at having so pleasant a companion. All his admiration for and his interest in her were fully revived once more.

He had taken a little more stimulant at lunch than he usually allowed himself; this had brightened him up considerably, had energised and emboldened him. He knew he was taking her with him so that she should not pass most of the day with Arthur; Mrs. Beaversham had suggested this, but he would have done it even had there being no such suggestion. He disliked seeing Gladys with Arthur now as much as he ever did before. But a clearer realisation of his feelings and attitude had come to him at lunch. There had been a young man there, to Gladys's left, a handsome fellow who worked in one of the big accounting firms in the city and was one of Arthur's acquaintances. He had made himself very pleasant to Gladys at lunch, and Mr. Pemberton had been conscious of some resentment at this. It had made him feel, he said to himself, that he was only playing the part of an old interloper, and was only tolerated because of his position. So now, with the effect of cocktails and whisky still upon him, he voiced the thought in his mind.

'You are going to be disgusted with my taking you away from the brighter members of the party,' he said; 'it would have been nicer for you to be with that young fellow you were talking to at lunch—Cuthbert I think his name is—or with Arthur, or some other person like that. But I won't monopolise you tonight, I can promise you.'

'Now I know you are not fishing, but deadly serious,' she

interrupted, 'and I think you are very silly. Don't you see that if I hadn't been quite agreeable to coming with you I could have made some excuse? You are not the host today, are you?'

'No; a guest like yourself. Still . . .'

'Yes, I know. You were going to say, but stopped in time, that you are Arthur's uncle and that I may have thought it wisdom to be on good terms with you if I want to continue on good terms with Arthur: isn't that it?'

'Oh, how could you think that!' he spluttered. 'My dear Gladys . . .'

'I have only expressed what you did think, and there is not the slightest use in your pretending that you didn't think it. Well, you are wrong, and that is all there is to it. I am by no means as interested in your nephew as you and Mrs. Beaversham, and Hazel Beaversham, believe. I like him, he is a nice fellow, he is a good friend. No danger in all that, is there? I am not setting my cap at him. Hazel needn't worry.'

'Good God!' exclaimed Mr. Pemberton. 'How you modern girls do talk! Where do you get the courage to do it? You have no reserve.'

'What you call reserve was a pre-war product,' she answered, lightly. 'Reserve as you call it means that you and I should be at cross-purposes when a little plain speaking would put everything right. I know you like me; if you hadn't you would never have tried to encourage my work or have had me down at Mapleton, or even be here with me today—that may sound conceited, but I really believe that one of the reasons why you came to this house-party is because you knew I was coming—'

'That is quite true.'

'It is; and though one of your motives was to see that Arthur did not stick too much to me, and perhaps make love to me, yet I am sure you like my company. Very good. I tell you that I am not trying to catch Arthur, as the Beavershams

believe. They want him for Hazel, don't they? You want Hazel for him, too, don't you? And I want a nice time with nice people, and you have helped me to get it lately; it is through your inviting me to Mapleton last month that I have become acquainted with some very nice people, and I can sincerely thank you for that. We needn't spoil everything now. I tell you that I like Arthur, but I am not in love with him, or trying to hook him. That is a vulgar remark, but quite appropriate.'

'Gladys, what sort of a girl are you to say such things?'

'Merely a practical young woman who has to earn her own living and who does not want to let any nonsense prevent her from making her way in the world. A business woman, though young. What else should I be?'

'You ought to be something else; a great artist, for example, or a lady in a splendid and independent position.'

'A great artist? I am not so foolish as to think that. I try to keep sane, anyhow. A lady in a fine position? That means money, and I am a working girl. So, you see, your kind wishes on my behalf are impossible. But now that I have set your mind at rest in regard to Arthur . . .'

Mr. Pemberton startled himself by his answer to this; he heard his own words with a shock of surprise—

'Confound Arthur, and everybody else! Don't you see, Gladys, that I did not want you to be too nice to Arthur because I hoped you could be nice to me?'

She started. She glanced swiftly at his face, which now was eager, inquiring, almost passionate: the face of a lover. She was surprised, flustered. This, at any rate, was something she had never expected, though she had known that he liked her.

'This is very sudden,' he said, and she astonished him by bursting into laughter. 'That is the old, old comment of a woman,' she cried, and he felt that he had made a fool of himself. But her laughter and exclamation were really the result of a swift stimulation and exhilaration of her whole

emotional being; she had received a shock, but it had exalted her, thrilled her, and so had found expression in that peal of joyous sound. She was not laughing at him, she was laughing out of sheer exuberance of spirits, for the fact that had with the swiftness of lightning impinged upon her consciousness was that this colonial magnate, this confirmed bachelor, this man so proud of his prestige, his position, his wealth, was making love to her with a deadly seriousness, was the rival of Arthur and of every other man whatsoever, and was not the sort that meant nothing when he spoke as he did. He was in earnest. she could see that. He was offering to make her his wife. That was what he had had at the back of his mind when he had said, a minute ago, that she should occupy a splendid and independent position. It was such a position that he could give to her. The thing had moved her irresistibly to a burst of laughter that was really a paean of triumph.

But she saw that he was wounded; he had misunderstood her.

She put a hand on his knee: 'Thank you,' she said: 'you are a dear. Of course I want to be nice to you.'

But she did not wish that he should say anything more just then: the chauffeur, though the car was a huge one, might overhear. She affected to be interested in the town which they had now entered.

The shops of Port Antonio were closed for the Sunday rest, but at the windows of the little wooden houses lining both sides of the streets through which they drove sat women, black and brown and lighter-coloured, gazing aimlessly at nothing, and in the streets themselves lounged little groups of dark-skinned girls and young men, chattering indolently, and the sunlight was thrown back from the hard white surface of these sordid thoroughfares littered with fruit skins and scraps of paper. Presently they were climbing the Titchfield Hill, with its finer residences: its tall two-storied houses of wood and burnt brick, and its bungalows.

The hill rose steadily. Higher up they came to flowering shrubs; soon they were within the precincts of the Titchfield Hotel, and had drawn up at its principal entrance. On the wide veranda, painted a deep green, guests were lolling in rocking-chairs; a porter hurried up to them to help them out of the car. Mr. Pemberton dispensed with his services, assisted Gladys to alight, then together they walked to the other side of the building, coming out on the opposite veranda, immediately in front of which the ground broke swiftly towards the shore and the glistening sea.

The blue and silver water of the harbour swept away, a pale blue sky overhanging it. The earth in front of the hotel just here had been terraced, and on these terraces a tropical garden of palms and lofty shrubs, and evergreen trees, thick and umbrageous, had been planted, a garden rich and resplendent in greens and scarlets and reaching steeply to the foot of the hill. Long flights of steps with intervening platforms led downwards. Gladys glanced inquiringly at Mr. Pemberton. 'Shall we go down?' she asked, and he assented, though such adventures were not easy at his age. She must have understood this; she walked slowly, and he accommodated his pace to hers, grateful that she did not attempt quick movements to show a girlish agility. They found a bench below and sat upon it; it was she who reverted to the conversation in the car.

'So you were jealous of the younger men?' she said; 'Don't you think you underrate yourself?'

'You can't mean that—do you mean it?' he cried eagerly. 'I am so much older than you that—'

'You don't look old; and I don't see why you should think that only boys would interest me. I am older than you think I am.'

'You look so very young.'

'I am older than I look, and you look younger than you are; you are fifty, I suppose?'

'I have taken good care of myself all these years,' he

answered with smug satisfaction. 'Perhaps, without knowing it, I was waiting for you to appear. You understand now why I hated to see Arthur making love to you? I had, I could have, no objections to *you*; you would adorn any position. You were too good for Arthur, too good for me; but I could not help loving you, though I did not think of telling you so. I would have done it some day, though; it was bound to come out. Do you think you could like me?'

'I think ever so much of you,' she replied. Neither of them spoke about her loving him, though that did not strike them at the moment.

'Then . . . ?'

'You are sure you want me to marry you?'

'Very sure. I never was more certain of anything in my life.'

She pondered. She was not in love with him; how could she be? But she was in love with no one else, so far as she knew: love did not seem to matter much in life as she had found it. He could give her much that she desired, craved for, had believed it would be so much worth her while to win. Nobody else that she knew could do that. It was a splendid prospect that opened before her; but if she said yes at once she might seem, even to him, precipitate; he might afterwards think she had accepted him for what he possessed, and that would be a bad beginning. There was another consideration, and it affected her decision. Were they to return to Morley that afternoon, engaged, Mr. Pemberton might mention the circumstance; his very attitude would proclaim it. And Arthur would know. Arthur—poor fellow! He would be hurt to the heart at the very moment he was so happy. She could not allow that. It would doubtless be a fine revenge to see the faces of Mrs. Beaversham and Hazel when they heard the news; but she could savour that revenge later on. She must spare Arthur now . . . poor Arthur.

She made up her mind.

'I will tell you later. You must think over what you have said. You may want to change your mind.'

'Never,' he asseverated firmly, and the set of his mouth and chin told of an unshakable determination.

'Still, we can wait a while. When you next come over to Kingston I will tell you.'

'Then I shall come tomorrow,' he said.

'You don't waste time, do you?' she smiled; then thought of another scene. Arthur, whom she had refused, had nevertheless kissed her that night with passion. His uncle, whom she had now given every reason to hope, made no effort to offer a caress. This was reticence, a reserve that had come with years. The difference slightly chilled her.

CHAPTER 8

ARTHUR was lounging in an easy chair on his veranda at Morley, pondering the news he had heard from his uncle a few days before. Mr. Pemberton had been jubilant and jaunty; he would be married in a few weeks, he had won the most beautiful girl in Jamaica, and now his cup of happiness would overflow if only Arthur would follow his example. He had again suggested Hazel Beaversham. He exhorted Arthur to go in and win.

Arthur had gone to Kingston for an interview with Gladys. She was disposing of her studio; art had served its purpose and would now only conflict with matrimony if persisted in. She had been very kind, but firm and businesslike. Yes, she was going to marry Mr. Pemberton, and she hoped to make him a good wife. She would try to make him happy. Arthur himself would marry some day—

‘Hazel Beaversham, eh?’

‘Who said that, Arthur?’

‘Well, it is Uncle Alfred’s suggestion, so I suppose it is yours also: uncle and aunt would agree, wouldn’t they?’

‘Don’t be silly, Arthur.’ She was thoughtful for a moment, a frown appearing on her brow. ‘I don’t want to interfere with your uncle’s plans,’ she confessed, ‘I am only an outsider. But Hazel Beaversham, Arthur? She is purse-proud and pretentious; you would never be happy with her. Why should you be in a hurry to marry?’

‘I am not,’ he answered bitterly; ‘but I don’t see why it should matter to you now what I do. You are only marrying for position and wealth, Gladys. You don’t love my uncle.’

‘I am not in love with anybody else,’ she answered

evasively; 'but don't do anything rash, Arthur. Don't throw yourself away. And I can always trust you, can't I?'

'Better than I could ever trust you,' he replied bluntly, and because she knew the cause of his rudeness she did not resent it.

'Then promise me you won't repeat what I have just said to anyone.'

'You don't want it to appear that you and my uncle have different views. Is that it?'

'Yes.'

'I promise,' he said, with a laugh that was three-fourths bitterness.

'I knew you would; you are a good fellow.'

Thus had the interview ended. He had not seen her since, and now he was thinking of that last talk and of previous meetings and conversations. Everything was over now, even before anything had well begun.

'You look sad, Sahib.'

Marie Ramsingh's voice broke in upon his meditations; she had come out on the veranda from the room behind, a lithe figure in white and scarlet, with her silver bracelets gleaming on rounded arms.

She stepped quickly into the gloom of the veranda, to his right; from where she stood her form could hardly be seen by anyone passing in the grounds below. She evidently wished to avoid extraneous observation.

'You here, Marie? I thought you had gone off already,' he replied.

'I am just giving a last look round before going. I noticed you didn't eat much dinner, and you hardly eat las' night either, or the night before. An' you look sad. You are in love, Sahib?'

'Marie!'

'Don't be vex: don't say I am forward. But you look so sad...'

'Oh, I am not vexed; but I am sad, very. I didn't know I was showing it, though.'

'I am right? You are in love?'

'You shouldn't ask such a question, should you?'

'No; but I feel sorry to see you so sad. You look unhappy, an' I am not happy myself, so I sympathise.'

'But Ramsingh loves you, Marie.'

She said nothing to this; then, concluding that he was not just then inclined to confidences, realising too that she might easily presume too far, she bade him good-night and left him to his thoughts.

She was certainly rather bold, he reflected, though without any resentment. She and her husband were in charge of Morley Great House now, promoted to that position since the successful picnic of about two weeks before. He had discovered that they could arrange things as his other helpers had not been able to do, besides, his butler was not likely to return. Ramsingh's situation on the plantation itself continued as before; it was really Marie who had been put in charge of the house, with her husband's grateful consent. It meant more money, and Ramsingh was too true an East Indian not to love money. Also, the work was light, being one of supervision, and Marie could still look after her own household affairs. Marie went to the House in the morning and left finally after dinner, being free in the day to go to her own cottage, her new cottage which was near to the Great House. This arrangement suited Ramsingh. He hoped it would continue if and when the Sahib got married, as, somehow, it was being rumoured on the plantation that he shortly would.

But Marie Ramsingh had recently observed a distinct change in Arthur's looks and demeanour. Things were not going well with him, she concluded. Hence, greatly daring, her question of tonight.

He himself was thinking of the marriage that was to take place so very shortly, a quiet wedding at the Halfway Tree parish church. He had been asked, of course, and go he must, since he could find no good reason to give for abstention. But

he felt much as he imagined a man awaiting his execution would feel.

Some of his uncle's closest friends had found excuses for not accepting invitations to the wedding. The Beavershams had discovered that they must be in the country that afternoons, the Eversleighs, another family that vied with the Beavershams for social leadership, had originated sickness in the home; the slight cold of a younger daughter had very cleverly and obligingly become influenza, and no humane persons could ever, of course, deliberately take with them the germs of influenza to a bridal party. And so forth. Mr. Pemberton understood these people very well indeed, but he was not perturbed. He knew that they were puzzled as to what they should do, but he was confident as to the line they would eventually take. They disapproved of his marriage, but they would come to heel in time. He was too important a man to be ignored socially. He could dispense with the recognition of quite a few of them and yet have enough people of the best positions ready to be friendly always. As to the Beavershams, he determined to teach them a lesson. It would be he and Gladys who would cut them in the future and that would be for good.

Two weeks later the marriage was solemnised. Arthur was best man. Lily Reamster had gladly consented to be chief bridesmaid. There were thirty guests, and the reception was at the Myrtle Bank Hotel; it had been arranged that the honeymoon should be spent in Montego Bay—a fortnight only, for in April Mr. Pemberton would take his wife for a trip to the United States and England. Everybody admitted that Mr. Pemberton looked extremely well; he stood erect, ten years seemed to have fallen from him; the prospect of matrimony had apparently rejuvenated him, though he had always been a well-preserved man. Gladys looked lovely, too, said the guests, though somewhat older than usual. But this was rather an advantage, since it prevented any striking incongruity between them, in the matter

of age, from being perceptible. There were three or four persons present who had thought Arthur particularly keen about Gladys, but in his 'demeanour at the wedding nothing could be discerned that might give rise to entertaining gossip. He was calm, composed, and when toasts were being drunk at the hotel afterwards he made a neat little speech in which he expressed the proper and conventional sentiments. As for Gladys, she was the perfect bride. She carried off her part admirably. In her wedding garments beside her husband she looked like one born to enter into great possessions, completely used to them in fact. She was already the colonial lady of position and generous means.

Arthur remained in Kingston that night. In the evening he went to see the Beavershams, who had already returned to their home. (That is, Mrs. Beaversham and Hazel had, for Mr. Beaversham had never left it.) Arthur was in need of someone with whom he could intimately discuss this new turn in the affairs of his uncle and himself; and perhaps because he knew that the Beavershams were antagonistic to Gladys, an antagonism which he himself was now conscious of sharing, he had selected them as persons with whom he could talk freely.

They expected him. Before his arrival he had been discussed by Mr. and Mrs. Beaversham, who were somewhat perplexed about his future. What were now his prospects? How should he be allowed to stand in relation to Hazel? They had decided upon certain tactful investigations.

Mrs. Beaversham gave utterance to her state of mind that evening in the drawing-room, there being no strangers present.

'I can't imagine, Arthur, how a man like your uncle should have made such a mistake; he must be clean off his head! And none of us ever suspected it.'

'You all thought it was Arthur who was falling in love with the lady, didn't you?' laughed Hazel. 'You didn't suspect sly old Uncle Alfred.'

'If Arthur had done so that would have been more natural, though equally foolish,' said Mrs. Beaversham. 'Arthur did seem to be paying her some attention: didn't you, Arthur?'

'Just ordinary attention,' the young man replied, not desiring to appear as a sort of slighted lover, a part which he felt to be ridiculous.

'It might have developed into burning, passionate love,' Hazel teased, 'but perhaps you were too slow. We do things quickly these days. We rush 'em; but it is Uncle Alfred who has done the rushing this time.'

'I prefer deliberation myself,' observed Mr. Beaversham quickly, startled lest Hazel should be thinking of getting in some quick work herself. 'I like to look around me and know where I am. It is none of our business, of course, but we have known Pemberton and you, Arthur, all our lives'—a bit of an exaggeration—'and I can't help thinking that this marriage is hard on you.'

'How do you mean?' asked Arthur, who could not conceive that Mr. Beaversham should ever have wanted him to marry Gladys.

'Well, if there should be a son, you know . . . you were your uncle's heir all this time . . . but now it seems a little different, doesn't it?'

'Oh, very different. I don't suppose I shall ever be a pauper, of course; indeed I couldn't be, for I understand my business. But my uncle is not really old, and his wife comes before me, and his children, if there are any, must be adequately provided for. I am out of the picture so far as inheritance is concerned; I have realised that all along.' That the prospect did not please him he showed by the mirthless laugh with which he concluded his remarks.

Mr. Beaversham's feeling underwent a severe revulsion. He had imagined that things would be as Arthur had just depicted them; but there was always the possibility that Mr. Pemberton, who had thought so much of his nephew, might have made some definite provision that would make Arthur,

if not as rich as he had once had reason to expect to be, at least in a very comfortable and enviable position. He could have given him Morley, for example; a deed of gift might have been executed. That would have meant much, if by no means all. But Pemberton had apparently left Arthur in precisely the position he had always occupied, and though it was to be supposed that at the older man's death (which might not occur for another twenty years) Arthur would not be left penniless, that was a possibility not to be too much counted upon by reasonable and businesslike persons.

It was this new situation that Mr. Beaversham had already discussed with his wife. Now that his worst fears were confirmed by Arthur's own admission, he was conscious of a coldness towards the young man, as though, Mr. Pemberton having committed the sin of marriage, the fault was somehow to be attributed to his nephew. The Beavershams had determined to ostracise Mr. Pemberton and his bride—until, at least, it was plain what the Courtlands and some others would do. Should these decide that the artist might be accepted as one of themselves, the Beavershams would graciously relax. Meantime Arthur could be treated as a man betrayed by his elderly relative. But the keen business intelligence of Mr. Beaversham now warned him that to show too much sympathy with Arthur, to encourage him to be a frequent visitor at their house, would be a grave tactical blunder. Arthur had been infatuated with Gladys; it would be easy for him to turn for solace to Hazel. And she, being young and presumably romantic, without as yet enough time and opportunity to develop sound business principles, might be strongly inclined to heal the wound in his heart—to offer first aid, with disastrous consequences. That would be stark folly; it must be prevented. Mr. Pemberton had greatly wronged his nephew and the Beavershams, but the latter must not wrong themselves. Two wrongs never yet made a bad marriage right.

'Do you propose to remain your uncle's planting attorney

now that he is married?' casually inquired Mr. Beaversham, and waited eagerly for the answer.

'I suppose so; there is no real reason for me to cease.'

'I don't know that, Arthur,' earnestly remarked Mr. Beaversham. 'If you are no longer his heir—and you should know—it would be a mistake for you. I think, to waste your best years working for another man. By the time you look this way and that, you will be forty, and then you may still be only an employee. Without presuming to give advice, I would say, strike out for yourself. Make your own way. You are young, you have ability: why waste your time now that everything is changed?'

'But I can't go in for a profession at my age, Mr. Beaversham; I only understand agriculture.'

'You would get on splendidly as an agriculturist in a country like Canada, Arthur. You could get some land there and make something of it. This may be your great opportunity.'

'It is a fine idea,' agreed Mrs. Beaversham, well aware of what was passing through her husband's mind.

'Poor Arthur!' exclaimed Hazel; 'fancy his burying himself in the backwoods of Canada.'

'There are no backwoods in Canada,' asserted her mother positively. 'And Arthur has to think of his future. He has been shamefully treated by his uncle and an adventuress.'

'I had never thought of Canada,' said Arthur thoughtfully; 'but the suggestion appeals to me. I am inclined to act upon it. I think I will. After all, what is the good of my staying here?'

'No good whatever.' Mr. Beaversham was positive. The emigration of the young man would obviate the necessity of his being shown that he was not welcome to the Beaversham's house: to save people from doing unpleasant social actions was one of the reasons, clearly, why countries like Canada existed. 'No good whatever. It would never suit you to continue as your uncle's employee. You can never tell what his wife might want him to do to you.'

'She is going to try to get everything he has for herself,' added Mrs. Beaversham, who implicitly believed this. Then a kindly feeling for the young man, partly the result of her own sense of disappointment, swept through her. 'I am sorry for you, my boy,' she said sincerely, and for a moment her husband wondered in a panic whether she was about to weaken. He did her a grave injustice.

Arthur had arranged to drive himself over that same night to Morley. This necessitated his making his visit a short one; it had lasted less than an hour. When he bade them good-night he did not notice that neither of the older people suggested that he should look them up when he was next in town, though Hazel did. The Canadian business was uppermost in his mind now; he wanted to be out of Jamaica, he did not relish seeing Gladys as the wife of his uncle, day by day, month by month. Besides, his position was greatly changed; he must see to his own future now; it would not do for him to be a dependent. He craved to be his own master. He was grateful to Mr. Beaversham for his suggestion.

He compassed the seventy miles to Morley in less than three hours that night, thinking all the while of his frustrated plans, for he had planned to marry Gladys. He thought of Canada, which was now to be his goal. He had sufficient money to set up there as a farmer; indeed, he could set up for himself even in Jamaica, for he was not at all without resources; but he did not wish to remain in Jamaica; that would not be pleasant for him. He would make inquiries about Canada, and then, when his uncle returned from his visit abroad, a few months hence, he would leave the island. That was something to look forward to; it filled his mind with a purpose.

And he would try to forget Gladys, his uncle's wife, who had sold herself for money.

He arrived at Morley before one o'clock, a light in the house informing him that he was being waited for. He had

had a strenuous day; he felt empty rather than hungry; he would have a bit of supper and then to bed. His arrival was known; the door to the rear of the house, which opened into the dining-room, was thrown open, and Ramsingh ran down the steps to meet him. There was a boy to carry his suitcase up to his room, and Ramsingh himself prepared to put the car into the garage. He went up the steps, and Marie came forward with a smile of greeting.

'You shouldn't have waited up for me, Marie,' he said pleasantly, 'I didn't expect you to.'

'I am glad to, Sahib,' she replied softly. 'I kept supper for you. You are tired?'

She was looking into his face, in her eyes a light of genuine delight at his return. He remarked it; it made him feel that he was really back at home. She made an attractive picture, with her scarlet shawl and smiling lips and shining eyes. He had a feeling that it was rather comfortable to have a pretty woman in the house who could look after things as the ordinary servant never could.

He washed his hands and face quickly and came back into the dining-room, and she waited upon him herself. Her husband hurried in, as soon as he had locked the car in the garage, to assist her, but little assistance was needed. The meal was swiftly dispatched; Arthur bade both the man and his wife good-night. Her soft, 'Good-night, Sahib,' was accompanied by a flash from her eyes which was in his memory as he threw himself down upon his bed.

CHAPTER 9

THE neighbours said that the Pembertons were 'doing things in style'. There was more than a touch of envy in this remark, for none of the immediate neighbours were on visiting terms with the Pembertons. After their return by way of America from their honeymoon trip to England, Gladys had persuaded her husband to buy and furnish a house near Kingston, a comfortable residence on the northern side of the Hope Road. Gladys had no disposition to pass most of her days in the country gazing at a wide prospect of banana-fields and shining river, and listening to the sing-song voices of East Indians and Negroes as they went about their work among the cattle. That sort of thing was interesting at intervals, but monotonous if unvaried by change. So she suggested a town residence to Mr. Pemberton, and he fell in with her wishes good-naturedly, though, more than ever now, he preferred to reside in the country.

He bought Delva and fitted it out; he and his wife would occupy it when they came to town. Tonight they were giving a party there, a party planned by Gladys. He himself would have liked it better at Mapleton.

The house stood well in from the road, the grounds were gaily illuminated, and a fountain threw a silver serpent of water high into the air. There were rose beds about the garden, and on either side of it ornamental trees with laid-out walks among them. The moon was glorious in a sky almost cloudless. It would have been warm, but for the altitude at which Delva stood—some six hundred feet above sea level, and but, especially, for the sweet breeze that stole down from the mountains to the north and pervaded the plain below.

There were some seventy persons at this party, though none of these were the people in the immediate vicinity. These were not personal friends of the Pembertons, they not being quite of the type, considered in terms of wealth and position, with whom Mr. Pemberton wished to mix on a platform of perfect social equality. The result was that though they bitterly admitted that the Pembertons did things in style, they were very energetic in analysing the character and intelligence of Mr. Pemberton and in dwelling upon the origin of his wife.

Somehow, something about that tailor's shop to the north of London had got about. How do these things emerge from a discreet privacy into disconcerting publicity? That is one of the mysteries of social life; but Mr. Pemberton himself, while in England, had met Gladys's mother and had inadvertently learnt that Gladys's father had plied an industrious needle and scissors in his lifetime; and it may be that he had talked over the matter with his wife, not in censure, but with some affectionate regret. He may have been overheard by the English maid they brought out with them, or the maid herself may have acquired the information independently. However that may be, first one person in Jamaica, and then another, had learnt something about it; not everything, of course, yet enough to raise the suspicion that Gladys had no right to call herself an artist when her father had been only some sort of tailor. What the one thing had to do with the other would have been difficult for the critics to determine; yet there was felt to be a certain incongruity between the two statuses, and those who knew nothing about art had a good deal to say about tailoring. These were chiefly the persons who were not invited to Mr. Pemberton's parties. Those who were guests at these delectable reunions were silent about needles and scissors except in their own homes. They did not even talk publicly about art, since it had once been locally connected with a shop.

People passing along the Hope Road in the electric tram-

cars stared in at the gaily lighted grounds of Delva tonight and had a glimpse of fashionably attired ladies and men in swallow-tail coats strolling about, or moving swiftly indoors to the strains of a uniformed orchestra. This was life, they thought, especially as they knew that never, except in dreams, would they take part in such a party. In the dining-room was a buffet, where one might get whisky and soda, brandy and soda, claret cup, sauterne cup, various sandwiches, delicate cakes, cigars and cigarettes, and between twelve and one o'clock there would be a regular supper on tables set out in the garden and on the verandas of the house. A supper with chicken salad, lobster salad, cold turkey and ham, caviare sandwiches, perfectly iced champagne, hot coffee and old French brandy, to say nothing of a choice of liqueurs. The dance would last until about three in the morning, but some of the younger people counted upon the good nature of their host and hostess and planned to remain until five. Then, before leaving, they would be regaled with bacon and eggs, toast and coffee, and would retire home to pass some hours in sleep after a perfect night.

Mr. Pemberton was feeling the strain of entertaining. The revolution that had occurred in his mode of life had affected him; his hitherto fairly placid rural existence had become almost a necessity to him, but Gladys was essentially urban and enjoyed crowds and gaiety and constant movement. Thus there was a conflict between her wishes and those of her husband, but it was he who had subdued his inclinations in order that she should be pleased. He was proud of her beauty, of her adaptability; he believed that no one knew of that dark shadow formed by a tailor's shop which stood in the background of her life; he was delighted that His Excellency Sir Arthur and Lady Mugsley had welcomed her as though she had been born in the purple and that she had treated the Beavershams and Buxtons as though they were inferior beings. On her return from England, when Delva had been purchased and a host of callers had demonstrated

that the social path of Gladys was to be as smooth as a polished floor, the Beavershams and one or two other exclusive families had quickly made some tentative advances. They had adopted an initial policy of smiles and bows; had these been reciprocated they would have followed them up with formal calls and thus have shown that large-mindedness and benevolence of spirit which the success of others so frequently induces some of us to show. But Gladys was in an uncompromising mood; she had once been consigned to the nether social darkness by these people; she would now prevent them from entering her own particular circle of light. She too would be a leader in society and antagonistic to them. They would still maintain their old position, of course, but she could easily hold hers without any recognition on their part. There would be more than one chief in the republic. Beavershams and the like would be dished with their own sauce.

Tonight Mr. Pemberton was happy enough, though a trifle weary. Everything was going well. Gladys was a perfect hostess. Later on, he thought, she would probably settle down and be content to live more in the country and come up to town less frequently; at Mapleton she could give all the house parties she liked. Let her have her fling for a while. If there should be a son a little later on . . .

He was sitting on the western veranda of Delva and talking desultorily to an old friend of his, Dr. Croseby, who had specially come over from Portland for this dance. The music had ceased for an interval; most of the dancers were sitting in the garden enjoying refreshing drinks. A few were walking about. Two of these, a young couple, emerged suddenly from the shadow of the trees some distance away and came towards the house. Mr. Pemberton recognised his wife and young James Cuthbert, the clever accountant, whom Gladys had insisted upon inviting to Mapleton and Delva on the ground that he was a very pleasant companion and danced divinely.

They were laughing heartily, these two, and were evidently appreciative of one another's society. Cuthbert looked strikingly handsome in his well-fitting evening suit; but indeed he always looked handsome. Gladys was lovely and radiant in her favourite yellow satin; they made a fine pair, a couple worth looking at, and there were not a few at the gathering tonight who thought so. The same thought came into Mr. Pemberton's head. And with it a feeling, peculiar and unpleasant, though he did not recognise it at once as a spasm of jealousy.

'There is Arthur,' observed Dr. Croseby, as Arthur Norris passed alone from the rear to the front of the house, walking quickly. 'I haven't seen him for some time.'

'I had to press him to come over tonight,' said Mr. Pemberton indifferently; 'he does not leave his property in Portland often.'

'His property?' queried the doctor. 'Have you given it to him? I was hearing some time ago that he was going to Canada; I think it was the Beavershams who told me.'

'Those Beavershams know too much about other people's business, and perhaps too little about their own,' retorted Mr. Pemberton. His eyes had followed Gladys and James Cuthbert until they had disappeared into the drawing-room in which the dancing took place. The musicians had now struck up another dance. Gladys, he guessed, would again be Cuthbert's partner. As soon as he could turn his chair round unobtrusively, so that he would face the drawing-room, where he could see them, he would do so. He felt that Gladys, as hostess, should not show particular favour to any one guest. There was no need for her to dance more than once with this accountant fellow. He wasn't so very high up in society, anyhow.

'No, Bill,' he continued, 'I haven't made over Morley to Arthur, though I had it in mind to do so. He is still quite young, and when I am dead it will be time enough for him to take full possession of the property. I consider it as

practically his now, and it will be his. He gets a very fine salary in the meantime; he needs nothing.'

'You didn't hear about this Canada idea of his then, Alfred?'

'He said something about it when I came back from England, but I told him it was all nonsense and he didn't press the point. I don't think he was ever keen on it: just a passing idea.'

'I wonder why he gave up the idea so readily,' mused Dr. Croseby.

'But why do you think Arthur seriously wanted to leave Jamaica, Bill? He may have thought for a moment that he hadn't much to expect from me after my marriage; but he could never have believed that for long. Why, Gladys is as kindly disposed towards him as I am; our regret is that he will hardly come to Mapleton. I can't see the reason . . .'

He broke off suddenly. His quick mind leaped to a very likely reason for Arthur's having wished to go away and for his abstaining from visiting Mapleton. Of course! Arthur had been in love, or nearly so, with Gladys. He may have been so much in love with her that he wished to put a great distance between her and him when she could not possibly be his. That was it! Yes; that was it: that was the explanation. . . . But then, though Arthur had given up the notion of leaving Jamaica, he had not once been to Mapleton since then. He had made no attempt to come near Gladys; he shunned her company. Therefore he could hardly have remained in Jamaica so as to be able to see and meet her: why, even to this dance Arthur had refused to come until pressed by himself in person. Mr. Pemberton, these reflexions concluded, was conscious of a feeling of relief.

Dr. Croseby resumed.

'He lives all by himself at Morley, in a big house and with hardly any friend visiting him. As you say, Alfred, he doesn't go about much. He has his work to do in the daytime, and that keeps him occupied, but at night he must be solitary.

and lonely . . . if he has nothing to occupy his mind. It isn't healthy. It won't do him any good. You should insist upon his changing his habits, Alfred.'

'Insist? But, good God, Bill, Arthur isn't a child; he is a man. If you think he is unwell or something, why don't you tell him so and advise him to go away for a couple of months? What's the good of coming to me? I can't do anything.'

'I somehow thought you might.'

'What are you diving at, Bill? Is there more in your mind than you have mentioned?'

Dr. Croseby hesitated, then said: 'There is nothing definite in my mind: only a feeling that Arthur's mode of existence isn't normal. I suppose I can never forget that I am a doctor.'

But three weeks before he had dropped in at Morley Great House to ask Arthur to give him lunch. Arthur had not yet come in, but he had seen there a pretty East Indian girl who had mentioned that she was the housekeeper and who, he had observed, moved about with a subtle air of proprietorship. He would not have remarked this had not the girl been one to compel attention; but he had thought that a single man, with such a young woman about, might easily fall into temptation. This, he felt, would not matter much if the girl were not married, as he had afterwards discovered that she was. She was not only married, but her husband was an East Indian: there might be complications. He liked Arthur; he would do him a good turn if he could. He must not interfere too deeply in other people's business; it would be ruinous to a doctor to be known as a paul pry. But he wondered whether Arthur's readiness to give up his plan of emigrating to Canada might not have been connected with the presence of Marie Ramsingh at Morley.

Having nothing further to say, Dr. Croseby twisted round his chair to watch the dance then proceeding. This was just the opportunity Mr. Pemberton had been longing for. He followed the doctor's example; as they both settled themselves in a position from which they could see the couples

as they moved across the brilliant oblong of the high door opening on this part of the veranda, James Cuthbert and Gladys came into full view. The eyes of both men fell upon this couple at once, and immediately Mr. Pemberton was seized with a desire to know whether Dr. Croseby thought it in any way peculiar or suggestive that Gladys should be dancing with the young Englishman; for this was their third dance together. But Dr. Croseby saw nothing whatever in the circumstance, and in any case Mr. Pemberton could not ask him what he thought. He scanned the doctor's face closely, but that betrayed no sort of feeling beyond a slight interest in the dance. That look might be only a mask, however, reflected Mr. Pemberton; the doctor, and many others, might be thinking things which were derogatory to the dignity of Mr. Alfred Pemberton.

The night was spoilt for Mr. Pemberton. He was now not only a little tired, he was distinctly annoyed and perturbed. He did not like this man, James Cuthbert, and he felt that Gladys had not acted as his wife should have done. He stuck it out, however, and outwardly continued amiable, but he was glad when some of the older guests began to take their departure. He passed word to the orchestra, and at half past two o'clock it played the national anthem. In another half an hour everybody had left, and Gladys and Mr. Pemberton at last could go to bed.

'It's been a wonderful night,' yawned Gladys happily; 'everybody enjoyed themselves.'

'Oh!'

'Except Arthur possibly; he left at about eleven o'clock. Said he had to get back to Morley early as he had some pressing business to attend to this morning.'

'I didn't see him before he went,' said Mr. Pemberton.

'He didn't want to attract any attention to his leaving. He met me just before a dance and told me he was going; then slipped off. I said I would mention it to you later on.'

'But you didn't.'

'I hadn't a good opportunity. Did you want to know particularly?'

'I can't say I did.'

'Why are you talking so coldly, Alfred? You are not quite yourself. Are you tired, poor old dear?'

'I am not more tired than anybody else would be after sitting up nearly all night, Gladys, even if I am a poor old dear. My age has not yet become senility.'

'Alfred, what is the matter with you? You are angry—you needn't shake your head; I know you are. And after such a glorious night! What *is* the matter?'

'Nothing, except that I think that, as my wife, you might pay some attention to my guests generally, and not only to one or two. That doesn't look very well, don't you think?'

Gladys paused in the brushing of her hair. She was already well acquainted with ebullitions of peevishness on Mr. Pemberton's part, and always she found them trying. But she usually controlled her temper admirably, though sometimes it was tried to breaking point.

'I paid due attention to everybody. They all thought I was a good hostess. You have nothing to complain about.'

She said this very quietly, but there was a strain on her nerves.

'You danced nearly all the time with the same man. Was that courteous to the other men?'

'I danced just four times with James Cuthbert; all the other dances I gave to other men. Jimmy is an excellent dancer, and I don't see that, because I am hostess at Delva, I am to deprive myself of some good dancing. I don't see other women doing that.'

'Your position and mine—'

The tension at this hour of the morning, after such a hectic night, during which champagne had played such a stimulating part, was just a trifle too much even for practised restraint. 'Don't you ever get tired of thinking about your position, Alfred?' she cried. 'After all, it is not so high and

mighty, is it? Other people have position also, but it doesn't seem to be always in their minds.' .

'Indeed! Very well, thank you! You behave as you ought not to have done, and then you become insulting. This is your defence for giving most of your time to a dressed-up puppet like Cuthbert who hasn't an idea in his head and who would be a pauper if kicked out of his job tomorrow. All that I have to say is that I don't wish to see Mr. Cuthbert again in my house and I shall be much obliged to you to remember that. If he ever comes here or to Mapleton again I shall kick him out.'

'And all I have to say to that is this,' fired back Gladys, now roused at last. 'I intend to have pleasant friends, and I refuse to allow you to choose all my friends for me. Some of your people of "position" are simply stuck-up bores; I feel like screaming when I have to talk to them. All that they can do is to make a little money and spend it ostentatiously, men and women alike, and they are the rankest snobs I ever came across. Who are they, anyway?'

'And who are you?'

'If it comes to that, Alfred, who really are *you*?'

He did not, could not answer. He looked at her stupefied. Inwardly he quailed a little before her anger.

She was fighting back as she had never done before: a suspicious circumstance, possibly, but also, on the other hand, quite possibly a proof that she felt she was in the right and so would not stoop to agreement or blandishments. He was not appeased but he did not wish the quarrel to go any farther. To hurl the tailor-shop in her teeth would be to hurt himself. He took refuge in quiet dignity and went to bed. Later on he could determine his course of conduct.

On her part Gladys knew perfectly well what was the matter with him. It was not the first time that she had discovered distinct symptoms of jealousy in him. They had amused and irritated her; but now the irritation was uppermost, she had no consciousness of amusement. She was a good wife to him; she knew it. She intended to continue

so; it would be madness for her to alienate his affection. Her natural good sense warned her that he was quite capable of inflicting injury on those who offended him deeply, and he would perhaps more keenly resent what he considered offence if it came from one for whom he really cared. He might strike such a one to injure, even if in so doing he hurt himself. She was dependent upon him. There had been no marriage settlement; he therefore could leave her penniless. She had thought of a marriage settlement when preparing for her marriage, but she had not dared to mention the matter; it would have looked too mercenary. And she had no one in Jamaica to arrange it for her; and, in England, only a mother who knew nothing about such matters, who could not come out in time, and whom it was not desirable to bring forward too prominently. She had taken her chance; that was inevitable; and she was not disposed to run any avoidable risk now. That thought was ever in her mind; at the same time every impulse and feeling of youth revolted against the prospect of a vegetating life, and against mixing only with those who thought incessantly of their status and of the people they could afford to know. She wanted company, the society of persons like herself; she craved joyousness and gaiety; she felt that if she were to have none of these things she would have made, not a sound, practical and sensible marriage, but a terrible sacrifice. She would have paid too much for what she got—a terrible price.

But she was just. She knew that her husband did for her things that gave him personally no pleasure; and if he did show symptoms of jealousy when young men paid her intoxicating compliments (ignoring his presence), or when she seemed to prefer their company to his, he managed to refrain from saying anything to prevent her from enjoying their society. Except now. Cuthbert, who was perhaps the handsomest man of her acquaintance, had stirred Alfred to antagonism, and Alfred meant very much what he had said. To defy him, as at first she had been tempted to do, would only

make trouble between them. Later on he himself might come to see that he had been silly; she had heard him admit before that he had jumped, in regard to persons, to quite indefensible conclusions.

She too went quietly to bed; the next day she complained of a severe headache, more imaginary than real. This brought Mr. Pemberton to solicitude; he wished to obliterate the memory and impression of the bad quarter of an hour after the dance. Should he send for the doctor? She must run no risk. What could he possibly do for her?

'I shall be all right very shortly,' she assured him; 'but I wish you could put off going down-town this forenoon, and stay up here with me. But perhaps I am unreasonable.'

'I should be worse than a brute to leave you sick up here,' he asserted fervently, greatly flattered by her expressed wish for his company. He did have some business to do in Kingston; he had arranged to see his banker. And she knew it. But the very demand she now made upon him pleased him; it conveyed a desire for his presence when some women would have wished to be left alone. He at once rang up the bank to postpone the interview arranged. She recovered during the afternoon, suggested that she should go down to the town with him, and also that they should travel back to St. Mary early the following day. All this delighted him; the dispute of the early morning was not once alluded to; they were again on the best of terms with one another. He felt that she must see that there had been reason in his remonstrance, and that Mr. James Cuthbert was but an ordinary fellow after all. He disliked that ordinary fellow intensely, and even wondered whether he was not dishonest in the pursuit of his profession. Cuthbert looked a sneak, like the sort of man who would falsify accounts for a consideration. His face had something wrong about it. There was something fishy about the man's eyes. A sensible girl like Gladys would soon see this for herself. She was no fool. As for himself, he would never mention Cuthbert again to her.

CHAPTER 10

SHORTLY after eleven o'clock Arthur, during the dance at Delva, had sought out Gladys and told her that he had to get back to Morley that night so as to be in time for an appointment the next morning.

'You mean that you prefer to be alone in your country home than to be with us, Arthur,' she said wistfully, for it was only too apparent that since her marriage he had been avoiding her.

He looked at her fixedly. His look said: 'How could it be otherwise?' but his lips said, 'A country busha has a lot to do about this season of the year, Gladys.' So he took his leave, her eyes dwelling upon him as he went off to get his car. She wondered if he still felt her marriage deeply, and then, while hurrying to join her other guests, she wondered whether, after all, she was as happy as she tried to persuade herself that she was.

The roads were clear and he drove rapidly. Up to Constant Spring where a background of lofty mountains swung from east to west and stood out, a mighty bulk, in the glowing light from a high-riding moon. A turn to the left, and in a minute or two he had the plains behind him, and was speeding up an ever-rising road. And now to his right deep precipices began to yawn and the path twisted like a writhing serpent. And beyond the gorge rose hills and peaks, cultivated or forest-clad, a vision of beauty for those with eyes to see.

But he gave it not a glance. He was accustomed to the view, and his mind was preoccupied. He reached Stony Hill, a village now asleep, and from here he began the descent that would take him to the plains again, the plains on the

northern side of the island. But the descent was gradual, the precipices continued, the road wound and wound about, never straight for a quarter of a mile; and now there was a rushing, foaming river to his right, a river that ran southwards in a canyon formed long ages ago by some tremendous earthquake that had riven the earth in twain.

Now and then he must slacken his pace as the warning toot of an approaching car was heard. First the far-flung lights of this car would be seen illuminating the road, then the car itself would dash by him, the driver skilfully avoiding contact in spite of the narrowness of the way. Sometimes he must slacken his speed to pass without an accident some motor truck piled high with goods, and, on top of these, peasants and small townsfolk returning from Kingston to the country. Sometimes a cart, drawn by sturdy, plodding mules, trekked onward and must be negotiated with care. He ran risks at his rate of speed, but he was an admirable driver, and he knew that the Negro drivers of trucks and motor-cars were highly skilled also and could swerve out of danger when a collision seemed imminent. He was in a hurry tonight, and they were always in a hurry. But his and their nerves would be equal to the occasion.

It grew warmer; he was nearly at sea level now. To his left a wide river flowed, dark-gleaming, to the northern sea, a waste of white sand on either side of it. On an eminence beyond was Mapleton, but it was all in darkness now; farther on was the sea, and the tang of it came to his nostrils. Presently the sound of its pounding on the shore assailed his ear, in spite of the noise of his car, as he came within full sight of it and drove almost along its edge. The moonlight threw into silver relief the spreading expanse of moving water, with its far horizon, and the hills to the left were touched to a shimmering brightness by the rays of the moon.

He seemed alone on the road to Portland tonight. His powerful roadster was doing fifty miles an hour. Suddenly

the light dimmed, the moon was obscured, clouds began to creep across the canopy of heaven; they thickened and a drizzle began to fall. He did not slacken speed, even when the rain came down in a torrent and all the way was dark.

And now he turned inward, away from the sea, and was driving through thick forests of cultivated bananas, miles of dense greenery and pouring rain. The rain was a deluge, but he knew his course. At length he sensed rather than saw the big bulk of Morley Great House, and drove into the yard at the rear of the building.

The doors of the garage were standing open, but there was no boy to meet him. He seemed to expect none. He piloted the car inside the garage himself, turned off the lights, shut the doors, then rushed up the back steps of the house. The door opened at his touch; inside a solitary light gleamed. Standing well within the room was a human figure. He closed the door, and the figure came fully into view.

'I promised I would be back early in the morning, Marie, and here am I,' he said: 'it was quick work.'

'You got wet!' she exclaimed; 'come into your room and change; you are hungry?'

'No; and only my suit is wet, but I will change. You haven't slept?'

'I was waiting for you; I didn't want to sleep. Come.'

She led the way to his room, turned on one light and stood there while he hurriedly threw off the dress suit he had travelled all the way in, and put on a dressing-gown. She herself wore a loose robe of dark material, and not a single piece of jewellery now adorned her neck and arms. Outside, unless she stood in an open space where there was light, she would not be observed. In the shadows she could move about without fear from prying eyes.

'You not hungry?'

'No; except to see you.'

She smiled at that; and when he sat down in a great leather arm-chair she placed herself on his knees, as one

accustomed to doing so. She leaned against his left shoulder, then inclined her head and kissed him.

'You enjoy the party?'

'Hardly. I had to go; I couldn't refuse after my uncle pressed me; but I was glad to get away.'

'His wife looked pretty like she always do?'

'Oh, yes.'

'You never go to Mapleton since she married him, but you used to go before. And she was here the day when I first came here, when you give the big lunch: you remember?'

'Quite clearly.'

'Why you never go to Mapleton now?'

'Would you like me to go?'

'No! But I wonder. I hear people about here say you did love her, but your uncle cut you out. True?'

'People about here should mind their own business and be careful how they talk! Whom did you hear say that?'

'Never mind. You want to sack them? But that show that they are right. I thought at first the dark-hair young lady wanted you; in fact she did want you. I saw how she held your arm, how she look into your eyes, how she take possession of you; but you didn't bother with her much. The other one, your uncle's wife; it was she you wanted, no? He took her from you. Then I got you. You sorry?'

'No, Marie; but I wish you would stop talking nonsense. I didn't drive some sixty miles tonight to listen to this sort of thing. Did we arrange I should come over from Kingston for a conversation of this sort?'

'No. But I was thinking tonight how you never go to Mapleton, and I think I find out the reason. And you know why I wanted you to come back quick. I thought it was a good chance for you an' me to be together for a long time, with nobody to bother about: that's why I arrange it. And now. . . .'

She nestled up to him, kissing him passionately on the lips. It would have been easy for an observer to see that she

loved him with a fire and abandonment that he himself did not reciprocate.

He put his arms about her and they lay in the chair hugged close. Then she eased her position a little, and said: 'I want to tell you something.'

'Yes? Out with it.'

'Ramsingh made a row before he go to Mapleton after you went to Kingston.'

'My God! Not about . . . not with you?'

'Not directly; an' I don't mind.'

'But I instructed him to go to Mapleton to see Sampson about the treatment of Panama Disease on Farm Number Five, and he was eager to go. Sampson hardly comes here now, so it could not have been—'

'I told you to send him somewhere for tonight,' she interrupted, with the air of a woman who manages an intrigue to perfection, and is proud of it. 'And he wanted to go to Mapleton. And it look well he should go while you were not here, though it might have looked bad if you had stayed here. He didn't suspect nothing; but after you went away and he said in the Coolie Village that he was going for the night to Mapleton, Tom Das laughed, and some of the coolie women laughed too, and Das asked if he was going to take me along with him or leave me alone in the Great House. Das didn't know that you had gone to Kingston, but of course what he said could sound quite innocent. It was his laugh, and the way the coolie women laugh when he did, that made what he said sound funny. Ramsingh felt so, and he turned and ask Das what the hell he mean. And Das only laugh again.'

'Hurry up; tell me what happened,' insisted Arthur impatiently.

'Ramsingh pick up a stick and made for Das. He was going to hit him. But I was near and catch his arm, and told him not to mind what a fool was saying, for he couldn't mean anything. An' as Ramsingh know that he and me are

in charge here, and that you had gone all the way to Kingston for the night, he wasn't vexed with me. But he wanted to fight Das, and he shake me off, and there would have been trouble if young Mr. Robinson hadn't come up and stopped it. Mr. Robinson heard the whole story, and he said he was going to report it to you, for Das is a quarrelsome man and always provoking other people on the plantation. Perhaps he will tell you about it later.'

'And what did Ramsingh do?'

'He cooled down, for he knew you had gone to Kingston and there was nobody here, and he believe you wouldn't come back till tomorrow. But it wasn't about you he was thinking. He respect and he is afraid of you. He says you are a great man, a big buckra, and he know you saved his life when the bull charge him. I believe he thought Das wanted to insult him about nothing at all—nobody about here like that damn coolieman—and that Das brought me into it sideways; and Ramsingh don't like any man to refer to me. He seern to think I am a sort of slave.'

'I will wait to hear what Robinson has to say. Naturally, I can't take any notice of what has happened until it is reported to me, for I am not supposed to hear it from you. But I don't like it, Marie. It may have put ideas into Ramsingh's head.'

'I don't like it either,' she said thoughtfully. She fell silent for a minute, then resumed, with a note of defiance in her voice:

'But what about it if Ramsingh think anything?'

'What about it? Don't you see that he will make a scandal?'

'You care? Why? You are master here; you can sack him. Even if he divorce me, which is the worse he can do, what I care? I wish he would! I am sick of living in the same house with him! I am sick of seeing him every day! I don't like him; I hate him! The sooner we separate the better! I feel sometimes like telling him everything—everything!'

She had wrested herself free of his arms as she spoke, and was gesticulating vehemently. Her face was aflame with feeling. Arthur realised that it might be but a matter of time when she would break openly with the dour East Indian to whom she had been married when hardly more than a child. He shuddered inwardly.

'I am afraid I do care, Marie,' he insisted. 'You see, if you were a single girl it wouldn't matter how we stood to one another. But you are married, and I don't like a scandal. It wouldn't be pleasant.'

Her lip curled.

'Would you be the only one? Don't a lot of such things happen, an' nobody take the slightest notice? What could you lose?'

Hardly anything, indeed nothing he admitted to himself. But his thoughts flew to Gladys. What if she should hear of this intrigue and its sordid sequel, if there should be a sequel? She would condemn and despise him; and he knew that he wanted her to think well of him in spite of all that had happened.

'I want to be divorced,' said Marie doggedly, settling herself once more against him.

'And I want to avoid that,' he replied quietly, 'and I expect you to help me. You understand that, Marie?'

She did not immediately answer. He put the question again, and then she said 'yes', with a faint intonation of resentment.

Presently: 'Why you afraid?' she asked.

'What's the good of explaining? Don't you see my uncle would be annoyed if it was said that I had taken away the wife of one of my assistants?'

'Humph. You been afraid from the start. I saw that you liked me from soon after I come here: an' I like you from the day you interfere between me an' Rainsingh, about Sampson, at Mapleton. I didn't care a fig about Sampson—I wouldn't even look at a brown man like him.

But I wouldn't let Ramsingh boss me as he like. Then I saw you an' heard how you talk to Ramsingh, and I fall in love with you; and when I came here I make up my mind to make you love me; an' you love me now, don't you?

‘Of course, Marie, you know I do.’

‘But you love somebody else too, and better; I can see that every now and then. I guess who, too. I guessed it tonight. But it don't matter, for I have you. Only if she was to try an' take you away from me—’

‘Will you stop talking nonsense!’

‘I would kill her.’

She pressed closer to him. She kissed him again and again to prevent his making any comment on this threat of hers. Then she resumed.

‘At first it was me who had to make love to you. That wasn't right.’

‘Well, I did like you very much, you know.’

‘But if I didn't waylay you, so to speak, and talk to you often, and then kiss you one day, you might be going on foolish still.’

‘I was afraid, you see; I tell you so frankly. You are married.’

‘But now?’

‘Well, in for a penny, in for a pound. Don't let us dwell any longer on dangers and risks, we'll meet them as they come. You are sure nobody knows you are here tonight?’

‘How could they? An' I'll leave before daybreak; and Ramsingh won't be here before twelve o'clock. So everything is all right. What you going to do about Das?’

‘If Robinson reports him and Ramsingh complains about him, I will send him away. He is only a hired man.’

‘I will tell Ramsingh to complain,’ she said vindictively, and again her arms stole round him.

‘You going to stay all night in this chair?’ she asked after a few minutes, and he laughed.

She rose and stood before him, a beautiful, lithe, sinuous

figure in bronze, with passion blazing from her eyes. Her finely-cut face looked down upon him intense: the thought flashed through his mind that she had a kinship with the tigress of her ancestral India's jungles. She held out her hands to him, caught his, and pulled him up out of the chair. She walked to the table and extinguished the light.

CHAPTER 11

THE rain had ceased, but it still was dark at half-past four in the morning. The moon had disappeared below the western horizon. In the pastures the cowmen were already stirring, but the pastures were far away. Round about Morley Great House only two persons were awake; one of these slipped furtively out of the house, wrapped in a dark cloak, and made her way hurriedly but with caution to a little cottage at not much distance off; keeping within the shadows she could only be seen by someone who might come within a couple of yards of her, and even then she might not be recognised.

On his part, Arthur went down the back steps of the house, and carefully, and as quietly as might be, backed the car out of the garage. He was dressed in his ordinary working clothes. He then went towards the servants' quarters, situated at the other side of the building, and rapped loudly at the door where slept the boy who looked after the car. His rap awakened one or two other servants also, and these heard his voice summoning George. George was out of the room in a jiffy, and hurried off to wash down the car; quickly after him came a couple of other domestics. George muttered an excuse about not expecting the Squire much before lunch-time; the other servants busied themselves about preparing breakfast for the master. One of these, a woman, went into Arthur's room and found the great four-poster mahogany bed as she had left it, with no appearance of having been occupied. Marie had thoughtfully seen to it that it should be so.

Arthur drank two cups of coffee and ate some food, then said he would have a little sleep before going about the day's work. He sent a message to young Robinson, telling

him to come up to the house for a talk and intimating that he should come at the luncheon hour. Now and then Robinson, being by birth and upbringing a gentleman, was made a guest at the Great House, a distinction not enjoyed by bookkeepers and subordinate assistants as a rule, and therefore highly appreciated.

Arthur judged that no one in Morley could have the slightest suspicion that he had returned earlier than five o'clock and had been in the house for nearly three hours. Yet, as he lay down to snatch a little rest, he was plagued with a sensation of shame and disgust which he often experienced these days; these subterfuges he was forced to employ were supremely distasteful, he could only feel loathing in adopting underhand methods to deceive an East Indian employee and his own house servants.

He had been very careful ever since the day when Marie, whose glances and words he had noticed more and more when they were together (she had intended that they should be), had suddenly told him in a whisper how much she loved him. She was very close to him; they were alone; they could easily hear if anyone entered the house.

He should, he told himself, not pursue the conversation further; her words were as emphatic as words could be and not be misunderstood. But he was lonely and depressed and still filled with his purpose of leaving the country; and she was beautiful to look upon, and dangerously alluring, and the woman he cared for was beyond his reach for ever. He craved for sympathy and affection such as only a woman could give, and this one was offering all this and more to him; her eyes were fixed on his with a strong, compelling appeal; he yielded to that appeal when he asked:

'What do you want Marie?'

'Love. *You*. Don't you see that. Don't you know it?'

And now she was so near that their bodies touched, and with a quick movement his arms went round her and she was pressed against him. Their lips met; a few seconds after

she was standing yards away, speaking in a calm matter-of-fact voice about breakfast, for a servant had come into the dining-room. But just after breakfast, when she had found an excuse for sending the maid outside, she had bent down towards him as he sat at the table and kissed him again and again. And thereafter they had become lovers, her fertile, ingenious mind forming plans for their meeting alone by day and at night.

Unknown to himself, she weaned him from his projected cutting loose from Jamaica. While his uncle was away he still believed that he would carry out his plan, but he never mentioned it to her. And when Mr. Pemberton returned, and Arthur spoke to him about what he imagined was still a strong desire on his part, his uncle's casual disagreement (for Mr. Pemberton did not take him seriously) was sufficient to make him abandon altogether the idea of Canada; it was just some such discouragement that he had been unconsciously hoping for. Marie gave him something that he wanted, a woman-interest, and she was informed with a passion which sometimes startled him. She worshipped him, and she showed it whenever she dared, whenever it was safe to do so. She would openly have severed all connexion with Ramsingh had Arthur not insisted upon secrecy; but this necessity for secrecy galled and shamed him far more than any sense of wrong-doing in his relations with the young East Indian woman; there was something mean about it which he disliked and resented, and at the back of his mind was fear.

He dreaded discovery. Ramsingh would make a scene if he knew; the liaison would become the talk of the plantation, perhaps of the neighbouring plantations. There might even be a suit for divorce, though that was not very likely, for Ramsingh, when his anger had somewhat cooled, could probably be bought off: avarice possessed him. But Mr. Pemberton might hear of this episode, though actually that might not matter much. What would matter was if Gladys should hear of it. What would she think of him?

That was always the question in his mind. As the weeks went by he had grown to looking forward to seeing Marie about the house on other occasions besides mealtimes; he missed her when she wasn't there. Because he had imposed upon her the need for caution, she had thought out and put into practice little plans for preventing suspicion: sometimes she would ask her husband to go up to the house to act as majordomo, pleading an accumulation of her own private domestic work. She had done this on one or two late afternoons when she knew that Ramsingh had something of his own to do in connexion with the vegetable garden he was creating. Once or twice, when she had asked her husband to put in his share of work at the Great House, he had demurred, for the garden was very near to his heart and he dwelt with glee on the money he would make out of its produce. But she had insisted, almost to the verge of a row, and had carried her point; and though she longed on these evenings to be with Arthur, and envied her husband a proximity which meant nothing to him, she nevertheless was full of pride at the success of her strategy; her intellectual vanity was gratified by the ease with which she could blind the naturally suspicious and sour Ramsingh. Besides, she loved to listen to Arthur's praise when she told him how she had managed.

So Arthur had come to feel secure, or almost so; but now, suddenly, he seemed to sense an atmosphere of danger. What had Tom Das meant by that remark about Ramsingh's leaving his wife alone at the Great House while he went off to another part of the island? Nothing perhaps but a general reflection intended to annoy a man notoriously jealous and known to be so. Yet one could never be quite sure. This uncertainty gave rise to mental discomfort; if Das did mean anything specific, thought Arthur, then it was clear that Marie and he had not been as careful as they had thought, or that, through some sheer accident, something had been discovered or was strongly suspected about them. Suspected,

most probably; it might well occur to minds that were ever dwelling upon sexual relationships and intrigue that a very pretty young woman, distinctly superior to the domestic class, adorning herself tastefully and carrying herself with an air that testified to her consciousness of personal superiority, would be an almost irresistible attraction to a young bachelor with whom she came closely into contact day by day. Das had probably formed this conclusion and had given a hint of it, however obliquely. His view was certain to spread among East Indians and natives alike.

What was to be done about Das? That would depend upon Ramsingh and upon what actually had happened the day before. Robinson would stress the incident if he thought it in any way serious. If he did not, no notice could be taken of it.

Robinson came in to lunch, and after he had eaten heartily and the maid had been sent out of the room—Marie had only come in at the beginning of the meal to see that everything was right—Arthur asked him casually how work had gone on the day before.

‘Quite well, sir,’ said Robinson; ‘everything in order.’

‘Nothing happened to the cattle?’

‘No, sir; the Mysore bull tried to break down the walls of his pasture but didn’t succeed; he always tries to do that, now that he can’t jump them.’

‘That gentleman doesn’t learn from experience,’ laughed Arthur; ‘he is like most human beings. The labourers all right?’

‘Quite, but there nearly was a row at the coolie village.’

‘Ah; nothing important, I suppose?’

‘No; I put a stop to it’ (Robinson said this with pardonable pride); ‘but there might have been a nasty fight if I hadn’t been there. Ramsingh has a violent temper, and Das is very provocative.’

‘Tell me about it.’

Robinson told the story. Arthur made no comment; but

suggested that they might go on to the coolie village now; Ramsingh must be back and he would have to take the diseased banana field immediately in hand. He had told Ramsingh to wait for him at the village.

They rode towards the coolie village. Most of the men would now be in the fields, of course, busy cutting fruit that was to be carted to the railway station on the following day for shipment. They passed some of these on their way, dark figures deftly wielding the long knives, or, rather, short heavy broadswords, which are known as machetes or cutlasses, and which at one blow can sever a huge bunch of bananas from the parent trunk, or shear an arm from a human body. But for this latter purpose the machete is rarely utilised in a land with an inculcated fear of the law; and though strangers to the country sometimes shuddered when they saw these long, dangerous, deadly-looking weapons in the hands of peasants on the roads or in the fields, Arthur always laughed at them for their groundless fears if they happened to visit Morley.

Natives and East Indians alike were cutting bananas for the ship that was to sail next day from Port Antonio. First, the soft, fibrous, slender stem of the tree was hacked half through with the machete; then, as weighed down by the heavy bunch of fruit it swayed toward the earth, the cutter deftly caught the lower end of the bunch with his left hand and severed it from the stem with a single blow. The bunch came swinging down and was gently laid at the foot of the tree, unbruised, to be gathered later, with others, into a heap, and then piled into motor-truck or cart for transportation. The cutters were now scattered over the fields through which Arthur and young Robinson passed, each of these giving a sharp eye to the operations proceeding as they rode along.

'There is Das,' said Robinson as they went by one of the labourers.

'You had better tell him to come along—that is, if you

think I ought to take any notice of the little trouble yesterday.'

Robinson was not loath to have the trouble investigated. That would add to his importance. He pulled in his horse, Arthur following his example, and called out to Das to go to the coolie village. It seemed to Arthur that one or two of the other East Indian labourers glanced rather curiously at him just then; but that, he admitted to himself, might be pure imagination. He was in a mood to suspect every glance as a cynical accusation.

Das obeyed; while Arthur and Robinson rode on slowly, pausing every now and then for a few moments' inspection. When they came to the village they found that Ramsingh had not yet returned.

The life of the village went on, slowly, monotonously. The children had been dispatched to the school in a near-by village, the babies sprawled and tumbled about in the dirt in front of their little thatched houses, kicking up their legs and crowing contentedly in the sun, while among them strode busy hens and cocks, searching for grubs and for morsels of food and taking life seriously. Meagre dogs stood meditatively about, barking now and then by way of exercise, but without sufficient energy to bestir themselves too much.

The village was a mass of greenery. The banana was everywhere, broad-leafed and verdant, and above them tall coconut trees lifted their slender trunks, their heads in fire. Breadfruit trees were heavy with fruit, some of them as big as an old cannon ball, or nearly as large as a man's head, the beautiful leaves of the trees forming a grateful shade from the strong rays of the blazing sun. In tiny patches here and there grew canes, the juice-rich stalks of which would be cut when ripe and sold for chewing in the market of the town not far away. At the thresholds of huts sat coolie women, with silver bangles on their arms and ankles, and silver rings in ears and noses, pounding turmeric in wooden mortars,

making the curry that was prized as a condiment by those who liked hot flavours with their meat. Some of this curry the women would retain for their own use, for their families still favoured the pungent foods of an India which so many of them had never seen or but scarcely remembered. The rest of it would be sold.

The Indian village life had been transferred to Jamaica, but with changes and variations. There were Mohammedan and Hindu priests in some of these centres, but the Christian minister was potent also, and in time would be dominant. Yet custom, more tenacious than doctrine, held sway in this village on Morley. Here the woman belonged to her man with a sort of submission that was never the same in any purely native village or town.

'Ramsingh ought to have been here already,' Arthur observed to young Robinson; 'what could have kept him?'

Robinson had no explanation to offer.

'Perhaps we had better come back in an hour's time,' suggested Arthur, and they rode off to continue their tour of inspection.

When they came back, Arthur was surprised to find not only Ramsingh, but Sampson awaiting them; and Das was also in attendance. Sampson had brought over Ramsingh in his Ford car; it was he who explained the circumstances to Arthur. 'From what your letter said and Ramsingh told me, I thought I had better come over to see this Panama Disease patch myself. I didn't like to tell Ramsingh what to do without seeing it. You will have, I think, to send for the Government Inspector at once.'

'Very good, Sampson; it was very thoughtful of you to come over; I hope I haven't inconvenienced you too much.'

'No, Mr. Arthur, I finished my work before leaving; that's why your man is a little late. I would have come straight up to the Great House, but I heard you had arranged to be here.'

'Quite right. Now, Ramsingh, what is this that Mr. Robinson

has been telling me about you and Das? I don't want to interfere in any quarrel; I think you people had better thresh out your disputes among yourselves. But Mr. Robinson says there might have been a serious fight between you and Das if he hadn't fortunately been on the spot to prevent it. Why the devil can't you people keep the peace?

'Das insult me, Sahib; that is all,' muttered Ramsingh, who was not sure that he wasn't going to be blamed for what had occurred. 'Das provoke everybody about here.'

'So I have heard,' said Arthur. 'Well, Das, what have you to say for yourself?'

Tom Das assumed an air of injured innocence which contrasted strangely with his maliciously mischievous countenance.

'I only say to Ramsingh, Squire, if he was going to leave his wife alone. For I thought she might be afraid to stay all by herself. My wife would be afraid, Sahib, so I thought Ramsingh wife would be afraid too. But that was no harm. Sometimes you can't say a friendly word to Ramsingh but he lose his temper.'

This was rather too true, and even Ramsingh knew it. Sampson smiled.

'Well, Ramsingh?' said Arthur.

'Das ask me if I was goin' to leave Marie all alone *in the Great House*, Sahib, and that was different.'

'But I did know that nobody was goin' to be in de Great House, Squire,' lied Das glibly; 'an' any female would be frightened to be alone in a big, big place. There was no harm saying dat?'

Arthur knew that Das was lying, for Marie was never supposed to stay at night in the Great House. But how to contradict him? And, considering the way he had stated his case, it would seem stupid, as well as manifestly unjust, to deal with him harshly, and stupid and peculiar also to cross-question him closely. Indeed, it had been made to appear as though Ramsingh had been in the wrong. Ramsingh, too,

showed no desire to suggest that Marie's honour or reputation had been seriously assailed by any imputation of wrong conduct; he simply objected to Das' mentioning his wife lightly. Here was one of those cases into which no one cared to go deeply. Things were hinted at rather than said, and the hints might mean nothing.

There was not a thing to dismiss Das for, Das had assumed an air of perfect innocence. Indeed, he looked as though he had a grievance.

Arthur hesitated, at a loss to know what to do. At that moment Marie appeared upon the scene.

She had not been able to resist the temptation to be present. She was vain; she stood head and shoulders, socially, above the coolie women of the village. She loved to show off before them, even at the risk of their bitter enmity, especially now that she was no longer living amongst them. They wanted Das punished for his impudence. She wished to show that, as the person chiefly in charge of the domestic arrangements of Morley Great House, she was one to be reckoned with. Prudence might have warned her to leave this affair alone. But Marie was prudent only under compulsion, and she perceived no reason for any special caution here.

She went up and stood beside her husband, as though seeking his protection against insults. She glanced scornfully at Tom Das. 'Sahib,' she said to Arthur, as though telling him something he did not know before, 'this man, Tom Das, insult my husband and me yesterday, an' you should give us satisfaction.'

Ramsingh drew himself up proudly. He argued that if Marie had had any guilty intentions—he could not see how she possibly could have had any—she would not be acting as she now was. She was not trying to hush up anything; she was deliberately seeking publicity.

'I have heard the story, Mrs. Ramsingh,' said Anunur, annoyed, 'but I don't see anything in it to get warm about. I don't think Das meant to be rude, and—'

'Das is always rude, Sahib,' boldly interrupted Marie, knowing that no one else there, except Sampson, would have ventured to do so. 'Das provoke people by his impudence, an' then pretend he don't mean nothing. He provoke me husband yesterday, an' if Ramsingh had injured him you would ha' heard it was Ramsingh's fault.'

'Quite true,' muttered an elderly coolie woman who detested Tom Das.

'Das does seem to be provocative, from all that I have heard,' admitted Arthur, 'but I can't see that he said or did anything yesterday of a deliberately mischievous character. What is your opinion, Mr. Robinson?'

'Das causes a lot of trouble in this village, sir,' spoke up young Robinson boldly. He had heard of Das before.

'Sahib, Squire,' Das began to whine, but Arthur cut him short. The weight of opinion was certainly against Tom Das.

'I won't sack you, Das,' he said, 'for I don't see that you have done anything calling for such a punishment. But you are evidently not popular here; you heard what Massa Robinson just said. I think I had better remove you from here; that will help you. And don't let me hear anything more about you again. Robinson, put this man in the cattle pastures.'

Das glowered; he had a garden in the village that would be lost to him now. Ramsingh was pleased; there had been some punishment meted out after all, and it seemed as though Massa Robinson was responsible for its infliction, an opinion which Robinson also shared. Das thought otherwise; he attributed it to Marie. So did a couple of the women around. And so did Sampson.

Sampson was thinking as he rode off with Arthur and Robinson. Why had Mr. Norris taken such a personal interest in a matter which, normally, would have been left to a subordinate? And what had Marie to do with the Great House?

He ventured a question; he was a man of independent disposition and he knew his worth as an overseer.

'Why, Mr. Norris, did Das say anything about Marie Ramsingh and the Great House? What have they to do with one another?'

'She and her husband are looking after the Great House for me, Sampson.'

'But she doesn't live there?'

'No, in the cottage near by.'

And yesterday and last night Ramsingh had been in St. Mary, thought Sampson. Where had Mr. Norris been all the night? Sampson did not venture to ask such a question, of course; that would have been impertinence and might have drawn an insult. But it suddenly came to him that he did not like this thing, and that Das had decidedly meant much more than had been said.

'These coolies,' he remarked, casually as it were, 'are a peculiar lot of people—from Gandhi downwards. And Marie Ramsingh looks like a devil. And her husband is a mad fool. And Das is mischievous.'

'What on earth are you talking about now, Sampson?' asked Arthur, laughing.

'If I were you, Mr. Norris, I would turn Das and the Ramsinghs off Morley tomorrow.'

'And do an unjust thing, and make a fool of myself?'

'It might be wisdom,' said Sampson, soberly. 'And I don't know that it would be unjust.'

CHAPTER 12

IT IS not wise to say 'never'. The fates seem resolved to show how often futile are the determinations of human beings; to demonstrate the irony of final resolutions on the part of creatures conditioned by circumstance. Mr. Pemberton had declared, in an access of jealousy, that James Cuthbert should never again cross the threshold of his house; with that he had dismissed the matter as settled, for he prided himself upon such resolutions. He knew that he had had to revoke his decisions on many an occasion; but it did not occur to him that such a revocation could ever possibly apply to anything he might say about so comparatively insignificant a person as James Cuthbert.

Cuthbert was not quite so insignificant as Mr. Pemberton chose to think; he was a partner in the big firm of accountants with which he was connected. He was an able and energetic young man, and he happened to have a liking for Mr. Pemberton based on a few meetings with that gentleman. He liked Gladys Pemberton also, had known her before she married, regarded her as a sensible and companionable girl, and was glad she had made so good a match. Cuthbert, though still young himself, did not consider the disparity in age between Gladys and her husband as anything of importance; Mr. Pemberton was a hale and healthy man who had not, so to speak, allowed himself to grow old; Gladys was a young woman who had very wisely not permitted herself to remain too young. She had a balanced mind and temperament; James thought she had done well in marrying Pemberton. It never occurred to him, it could never have occurred to him, that Mr. Pemberton could possibly be

jealous of any friendship between him and Gladys; if anyone had suggested that to him, he would have laughed at his interlocutor for saying a perfectly silly thing.

Mr. Pemberton had not for some time been satisfied with the firm of accountants who audited his accounts. He thought a change necessary; it really was not, but it was his work, and so his decision was final. He offered his auditing to the organisation with which James was connected and suggested that they should send down to Mapleton a responsible person to look over his books and papers. If the firm's representative came on Saturday morning, wrote Mr. Pemberton, he might be able to finish the work by Saturday evening, and could stay over until Monday as a guest. This was hospitable, but Mr. Pemberton was always hospitable. Whoever was sent by the accounting firm could depend upon nice and friendly treatment.

The matter was discussed in the Kingston office and James at once offered to go over to Mapleton. He thought this would be regarded as a compliment by the Pembertons; he also thought he would enjoy a day in the country among friends. On a Friday night, therefore, when his mail was delivered, Mr. Pemberton learnt that James Cuthbert would be at Mapleton by nine o'clock on the following day. Then only did he remember that Cuthbert had something to do with the new auditors he had engaged. And this man was to be his guest for some two days!

He could not send over to Kingston to tell Cuthbert not to come; there was no way of reaching that gentleman save by a special messenger dispatched in a motor-car. And what explanation could he give for so strange an act?

But why was Cuthbert coming? It looked as though he had seized this opportunity of visiting Mapleton; if that were so, what was his real reason? Was it not to see Gladys? What was more, Gladys had known of the change of auditors, Gladys had known that someone might come from Kingston to go over Mr. Pemberton's books. Might she not

have communicated with . . . but Mr. Pemberton would not permit himself to go farther with the suggestion that Gladys had been engaged in such an intrigue. He would not put his ugly thought so bluntly into words. He felt ashamed of the thought, yet at the back of his mind the mean suspicion lingered. Nor could he see his way to believe that Cuthbert meant nothing more than any other person would have meant in deciding to visit Mapleton. Suspicious persons hardly ever see things in their obvious and ordinary significance.

'Your friend Mr. Cuthbert is coming here tomorrow morning,' he observed to Gladys in an even tone, after reading over the letter twice. 'He will be here about nine, and will leave on Monday morning.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Gladys, really pleased, for it had been somewhat dull at Mapleton of late. 'Did you ask him?'

'In a way I did.'

She glanced at him keenly. She remembered his outburst against Cuthbert after the dance at Delva, and he was hardly the man to have forgotten it himself. She put herself on her guard.

'Will he be working on Sunday as well as tomorrow?'

'No; Sunday will be a holiday for him as for everybody else.'

'Then why is he staying until Monday morning?'

It was his turn to eye her keenly. Was this real indifference, an ordinary question, or very good acting? It must be acting, since he had told her that the accountant from Kingston would probably stay until Monday morning.

'You forget I mentioned to you that if the Richardson people sent a man to Mapleton tomorrow he would spend Sunday here.'

'I remember that quite well; but that was a clerk. I didn't know you were inviting Jim. I think you might have consulted me about that, Alfred. A clerk is different; you don't have to make any special arrangements for him; but a man

you meet socially as an equal—well, the invitation should have gone from me, I think. Suppose I didn't care to have him here just now; suppose it wasn't convenient to me? As a matter of fact I don't think it is.'

He knew she was right, in so far as she knew the facts; he had known for some time now that she had a faculty for putting herself right and him wrong in little things, things which did not much matter but which left her in the superior dialectical position. He did not know that she purposely refrained from pressing more important points, knowing that that might lead to unpleasant disagreements.

'You are quite right,' he admitted; 'but the truth is that I didn't actually know they would send Cuthbert. He is coming chiefly on business. I wonder that he should come on such an invitation and such a mission.'

'He knows you and me, and regards us as friends: that is probably his reason. But you have said you don't like him, Alfred, and I can't have visiting friends you don't like, any more than you should have friends I don't like. Now what is to be done? He is going to be our guest for two days . . .'

'Oh, I don't mind him,' asseverated Mr. Pemberton, feeling that there was absolutely nothing to be done, and also feeling mightily relieved by the way Gladys was taking this affair. She had just made it clear that each of them must conform to the other's likings as to friends; if she had said that she should do so and had left him free to impose his companions upon her, a doubt as to her sincerity would have lingered in his mind. But she was insisting that they should stand on a platform of perfect equality in this respect, and she had asked him how they should act in regard to James Cuthbert. So, although that gentleman might have wangled that he and no other should come down to Mapleton tomorrow, it was clear enough that Gladys had known nothing about his intentions.

'I hope he is competent,' he went on, 'for when you have business relations with friends you can't treat them as you

would strangers. However, he is coming, and there we are. We must try and give him a good time.

He spoke heartily. What is more, at the moment he meant every word he said. He felt he had been foolish about James Cuthbert, and had suffered in dignity in consequence. He must try to show himself in another and finer light.

'On the whole I am very glad it is he who is coming,' he continued. 'I can talk to him more freely than I could to a stranger. And it will be nice to have a visitor in the house—one of our own sort.'

Gladys was genuinely pleased; this was a welcome change in Alfred's attitude. But she was too sensible to show how she felt. She took his remark calmly and as a matter of course. She did not mention James Cuthbert again that night.

He came the next day at nine, and after greeting his host and hostess warmly and washing the dust off his hands and face, went straight into Mr. Pemberton's little office to work. He was an expert; involuntarily Mr. Pemberton felt himself entertaining a respect for this very good-looking young man who showed himself a hard worker and very competent at his job. He did not stop until about a quarter to one, when he went to wash up before going in to lunch. Mr. Pemberton had by then realised that Cuthbert had come down to do work, and no nonsense about it. He expanded at lunch. A very pleasant hour was passed.

Cuthbert went back to the office at two, and by four in the afternoon he had quite completed his task. They had tea; after tea Mr. Pemberton remarked that a little nap before dinner would do him a world of good, to which proposition James agreed unaffectedly. But he turned immediately and asked Gladys whether she would not like a game of tennis; they might play singles for an hour or two, if she didn't mind. A cloud gathered on Mr. Pemberton's brow. He felt that Cuthbert had assented a little too readily to his going to bed.

'That's a good idea,' he said; 'it's better than passing the

time in sleep. Let's all go out to the lawn, and I will watch you two play.'

Gladys understood what this meant; Cuthbert did not. It didn't matter to him whether Mr. Pemberton sat and looked on or went to bed; but it mattered much to Mr. Pemberton, who would have loved his nap that afternoon and felt that he was being deprived of it by a gentleman who, after all, had come to Mapleton to be in Gladys's company. That was being made quite obvious now.

The dinner was not quite as bright a function as the lunch had been. Gladys was again conscious of the irritation which she experienced so often as a consequence of her husband's moods and of the restraint she imposed upon herself. One word stood out in her mind as she thought about his sitting out on the lawn all that afternoon; that word was 'old fool'. Happily, Cuthbert was bright, had a good deal of gossip to retail about the doings of people they all knew, and as he was a good conversationalist there were no unpleasant pauses at dinner. But soon after dinner Gladys retired, and it began to dawn upon the guest that the night was going heavily. At ten o'clock he himself went to bed.

They met in the morning at about nine o'clock, having breakfasted in their respective rooms. Gladys was slightly constrained; Cuthbert noticed that. Mr. Pemberton was a trifle glum. There was nothing to do before lunch except read, and James was not much of a reader; he began to think that life at Mapleton, unless the house was full, must be a very inferno of dullness and boredom. But he professed to be enjoying himself immensely, threw himself into a long chair, stretched out his legs, and pretended to be absorbed by a magazine whose very name he had not particularly noticed. Gladys went in and out of the study in which the men sat. Mr. Pemberton also pretended to be engaged in the perusal of literature. It was a relief when lunch-time came round.

Mr. Pemberton had been thinking. Something would have

to be done after lunch to amuse the unwelcome guest; but he was not disposed to sit and watch Cuthbert play tennis or anything else with his wife. Mr. Cuthbert was probably waiting for an opportunity of making love to Gladys, or of monopolising her company; probably he expected that the master of the house would retire 'o sleep. Well, that was what the master of Mapleton was not prepared to do. But there was a way in which the man might be entertained and at the same time closely observed, and Mr. Pemberton himself advantaged. Mr. Pemberton had been wanting for some days to see his nephew, had felt the need for a conversation about the properties which would go farther than any amount of correspondence. So the three of them could drive over to Morley for tea. Cuthbert did not know this part of the country and the suggestion that he should drive through it would seem quite natural to him.

At lunch Mr. Pemberton made his suggestion.

'I don't think you know the northside very well, Cuthbert,' he said: 'I am thinking you might like me to drive you over to Morley, where Arthur is; we could get there quite in time for tea and back here in time for dinner. Would you like that?'

In his heart James Cuthbert thanked God for Mr. Pemberton's brainwave. 'That's a capital idea,' he exclaimed; 'I should love to see something of your countryside. And Arthur—I have long since promised Arthur to drop in upon him some day. But you are sure you won't be inconveniencing yourself, Mr. Pemberton?'

'Not at all; it's only a drive of thirty miles; we can start at about three o'clock.'

'And be back here before eight,' added Gladys, merely for the sake of saying something.

'That's jolly,' agreed Cuthbert. Then he seemed to have a sudden idea, for he opened his mouth to say something, hesitated, and eyed his host with a sort of questioning look.

Mr. Pemberton was on the alert; perhaps Mr. Cuthbert

didn't want to leave Mapleton after all and was now feeling his disappointment. In a sort of grim silence he waited to hear what the man might have to say.

'You know,' resumed Cuthbert slowly, 'it has just occurred to me that I have promised Arthur to drop in upon him at any time for dinner and a bed; he has asked me on several occasions, but I never go his way.'

'Yes?' from Gladys.

'Now I wonder if you two would think I was an awful rotter if I suggested that I might make use of this opportunity of staying over at Morley for the night? I have been awfully happy here, and it has been very good of you to have me, especially as I practically invited myself. But if I go over to Arthur's, I shall have to fix a date for spending a week-end with him, and that is not easy for me. On the other hand, if I run off from you . . .'

There was no mistaking it: Cuthbert really wished to pass the night at Morley, and had given a good reason for this wish. If he did not leave Mapleton for Morley, that would only be through fear of offending his host and hostess. Mr. Pemberton was not so far gone in silly jealousy not to perceive all this. And as he flattered himself that he had been a good host, he did not imagine that Cuthbert could suspect his sentiments. So he told himself that he had been thinking like a fool, and again he surprised Gladys for the second time within forty-eight hours.

'I would prefer that you should stay tonight at Mapleton, Cuthbert,' he said. 'You have bucked us up quite a lot. But I can understand you would want to keep a promise to Arthur now that you are in his neighbourhood. I'll tell you what we can do. I am sure Arthur can get up a dinner for us at short notice; let us crash in upon him and ask for tea and dinner, then Gladys and I can leave you at Morley between nine and ten o'clock tonight, unless of course you would prefer our room to our company over there.'

'Shame!'

'Thanks, old fellow. But there is a string to my suggestion. If we let you stay over at Morley tonight, you must give us here and now a definite promise to come to our next house-party. We will take no refusal, will we, Gladys? You see, she agrees with me. You will have plenty of notice of the party; I promise you that. Is it a bargain?'

'This is really too kind of you,' cried Cuthbert, appreciating greatly the courtesy of the arrangement. 'I am not such good company as all that, you know. But of course I accept—*rather*. Indeed, I feel like a cad for having suggested that I should go over to Arthur's for the night, but it is really true that—'

'I understand, my good fellow,' Mr. Pemberton beamed. He was quite reassured now; more, he was convinced that he had acted in the last few moments with wonderful tact; not even Gladys could possibly suspect all that had been in his mind. He became gay. And Gladys, pleased with this exhibition of commonsense and hospitality on his part, felt her spirits rise also. Perhaps she had gravely misunderstood him; it seemed so. Then they were going to see Arthur, and she had been thinking of Arthur for some time. She realised that since that night at Delva she had been wanting to see Arthur. What a splendid idea it was, to go and see him today. Perhaps they would be able to drag him out of his shell.

James packed his grip, and by three o'clock they were on their way to Morley in Mr. Pemberton's seven-seater, James's car being driven by one of the Mapleton chauffeurs. But when they arrived at Morley they found the house closed. The boss was away, said the servant, but she believed he was returning later. She would go and tell the housekeeper of the arrival of the guests.

Marie came over in a little while, a white headscarf flowing over her shoulders, her smooth soft arms exposed. She greeted the new-comers gravely. Mr. Norris would be at home about six o'clock, she said. Would they wait? Could she get them anything?

James looked at her with admiration: men usually did. Mr. Pemberton remembered her; a darned pretty coolie girl, he thought again. Gladys recalled her perfectly, though she had never given her a thought since the day of that house-party at Morley. She had never thought of her as being permanently connected with Arthur's establishment: she realised the position now with something of a shock.

'This gentleman and I will have a whisky and soda,' said Mr. Pemberton in a tone of command: it was always at the back of his head that Morley was one of his properties and that he was master there as well as at Mapleton. 'Will you have anything before tea, Gladys?'

'No, thank you, dear; but I think we'd all feel better for a wash.'

'Exactly. Show us to the guest room, will you?' he said, addressing Marie, 'and take Mrs. Pemberton to Marse Arthur's room.'

Marie, not appreciating his manner, nevertheless bowed and obeyed. She knew who Mr. Pemberton was.

She took Gladys into Arthur's room. Gladys, at the first quick glance, noticed the little arrangement of flowers on the dressing-table and knew at once who had put it there. In some other ways, also, the room gave indication of having been looked after by someone with a taste quite unlike that of the common domestic servant. And this East Indian girl was so pretty!

Before Marie could leave the room Gladys said to her:

'We came over for tea, and to see if Mr. Norris could give us dinner. But of course if he is not going to be here before six o'clock, dinner is out of the question. But I suppose we can have some tea?'

'Yes, and dinner too. There is plenty of time; I will give orders to the servants.'

'Yes, but, you see, Mr. Norris not being here . . .'

'It will be quite all right. I will arrange it.'

'Oh, you!'

'Yes; I am the housekeeper; me and my husband are in charge. You can stay to dinner.'

Marie was not aware that she was speaking as one in full possession, and almost as though she could decide whether they were to have any dinner. She was not conscious that she was obeying an impulse to let this English lady understand that she was in command of the Morley domestic arrangements, had a claim on the house and its master, was a personage in the establishment, was practically its mistress. Yet that was the impression which her attitude and tone conveyed to Gladys, who was alive to a quick feeling of hostility towards this bronze beauty who carried her head so high and apparently ignored the circumstance that she was speaking to Mrs. Pemberton. And Marie too *was* hostile; she experienced a sudden quickening of her dislike for Gladys. She had been thinking much about Gladys and was satisfied that it was she whom Arthur had loved, and perhaps still loved; she had declared that if Gladys attempted to take him away she would kill her; and now this white girl stood there and was looking at her with steady eyes which said quite plainly, 'I don't approve of your being here.' Had Marie dared, she would have ordered Gladys out of the house, she would have driven her out. As it was, she must control her feelings.

Then Gladys spoke in quiet, cutting tones.

'What is your name?'

'Mrs. Ramsingh.'

'Ramsingh, eh? Well, Ramsingh, if I decide to remain to dinner I will let you know later on so that you may have time to prepare it. You can leave the room now, and remember in future, in speaking to me, that my name is Mrs. Pemberton.'

'I know it is Mrs. Pemberton.'

'Then say "Mrs. Pemberton", or "missis" when you address me! I am not accustomed to servants addressing me as an equal. You may go.'

Gladys had an instant's impression that the East Indian woman was about to leap at her throat. There was a subtle movement of Marie's body, like that of a snake rearing itself to strike. But at the same moment Marie realised what would be the result of any open quarrel with Mr. Pemberton's wife. She took a grip on her temper; she did not even answer. Yet she had her own method of retort; it was conveyed by a slow lingering scornful smile, a languorous turning of head and body as she gave her back to Gladys, a kind of contemptuous saunter as she moved to the door.

Gladys saw, understood it all, yet knew that she could not very well complain of a smile and a movement, and that if she even repeated the talk between herself and the girl, everybody would say that she had taken advantage of her position to be rude, since Marie, as an East Indian who was really not a servant in the ordinary sense of the term, might have meant no rudeness by not saying 'Mrs. Pemberton' now and then in her answers. It would not look well to have a quarrel with Arthur Norris's housekeeper on the occasion of an unexpected visit. But she knew without anyone saying it that this girl Marie had good reason for taking herself as a sort of mistress of Morley; Gladys's mind had leaped to a conclusion which nothing could shake. So this was what Arthur was doing! This was the life lived by the man who had professed to love her so deeply! He was worthless, miserable, contemptible! She would not wait to see him. She and her husband would leave James Cuthbert to await the return of Arthur; both of them would go back to Mapleton as soon as they could swallow a cup of tea; she would insist upon it. She knew that though Mr. Pemberton might want to have a talk with Arthur on business, he would do what she wished. As for James Cuthbert, it would be no hardship for him to remain for an hour or two alone. She would say so quite plainly if necessary.

And she did say so five minutes afterwards, when Mr. Pemberton was protesting that it would not be fair to leave

Cuthbert to wait for Arthur alone. She would not compromise on the subject; she was definite. Mr. Pemberton found himself reduced to apologising to James for this cavalier treatment, and to wondering how on earth he had ever imagined that Gladys cared much for the young man's society.

CHAPTER 13

‘WHAT’S the matter?’ asked Mr. Pemberton.

He had noticed, as indeed no one could have failed to do, Gladys’s tense stillness as they drove homeward, the set expression of her face; he thought (very foolishly) that by now he knew all her moods, but this one was new and inexplicable. It was not until they were home again, however, that he asked her what was the matter.

‘Nothing,’ she replied.

‘You are not ill, are you?’

‘No.’

‘But then, my dear,’—he paused. This could have no connexion with leaving James Cuthbert behind, for that was her own suggestion; yet it was nonsense for her to say that nothing was the matter when something so obviously was.

Mr. Pemberton, being touchy, felt irritated. It seemed to him that it became increasingly difficult to understand his wife. If he had thought that marriage meant anything like this—

‘Did you see that woman in Arthur’s house?’

It was Gladys who resumed the conversation. She had to say something about Marie to someone, she felt compelled to express her feelings. It had suddenly occurred to her that she might say something to Mr. Pemberton with very marked effect.

‘You mean that coolie girl?’

‘Yes; the coolie girl. You noticed her, of course.’

‘Of course; devilish good-looking; some of these East Indians have wonderful figures; hers is splendid. She is sensible too; no nose-rings and other disfigurements of that sort. She—’

'I didn't ask for a photograph of her, Alfred; you seem to have been eyeing her up and down, you know so much about her.'

'Good God! I only saw what you yourself must have seen! Is it she who has given you the dumps?'

'I don't know that I have what you call the dumps; but I object to going into any house where a young married woman of the lower class is in charge and acts impertinently. What is she to Arthur? Have you considered that?'

'Talk quietly, Gladys; she is Arthur's housekeeper, isn't she? That is all right. How does it concern you or me?'

'His "housekeeper" in the peculiar Jamaica sense of the word, isn't she?'

'No! You don't say you are thinking that? Why, she is East Indian and married.'

'Would that make any difference here?'

'It might with the coolies. And I don't think her husband would like it. So there can be nothing in what you think, you see. It never occurred to me, I must say.'

'Isn't it quite apparent? The woman acted as though she were the mistress of the establishment, as I suppose she is. You know that Arthur hardly ever comes to Mapleton now, and I understand that he hardly goes anywhere. He doesn't need society so long as he has his coolie girl, a married girl, too. What a nice situation of affairs! And I was taken right into the midst of it today.'

'I am sorry I suggested we should go over to Morley,' replied Mr. Pemberton earnestly; 'but I had no idea of this girl.'

'Well, what are you going to do about it?'

'Me? What can I do about it? I can't very well go to Arthur and ask him if he is living with a married woman; he would say no, and I would feel like an interfering fool.'

'And how would you feel if any scandal should occur?'

'Scandal over that?' Mr. Pemberton thought that if there were going to be scandals over things of the sort, then surely

the country would never be at peace for a moment. Gladys had much to learn yet. He could go back twenty years himself and remember a little East Indian damsel who—but she had not been married. Yes, that made a great difference: she had not been married. He felt very virtuous as he dwelt upon that fact; he could exonerate himself from all moral reproach. Marriage was an estate which should be respected; if it were true that Arthur was carrying on with another man's wife, even if that man was only an East Indian employee on the plantation, Arthur was clearly wrong, especially as there were so many unmarried girls to pick and choose from. There was a great deal in Gladys's point of view.

He had never imagined Arthur as strictly celibate; he himself had been a bachelor, but that was not at all synonymous with celibacy, had no necessary connexion with it. But Gladys was right; Arthur was making a grave mistake. Besides, the less one had to do with East Indian girls the better. He had once almost had some reason to think so in regard to himself.

'Why doesn't the fellow marry!' he exclaimed petulantly.

'Considering that you did not marry when you were his age, I wouldn't make that a grievance if I were you,' said Gladys. 'There is no reason why Arthur should marry if he doesn't want to; but there's no reason either why he should be living with an East Indian woman so publicly. It's disgraceful, and you ought to tell him so.'

'I'll see if I can. As you say, this thing is too public.'

'I said nothing of the sort'—Gladys was too deeply annoyed to be tactful now in answering Mr. Pemberton. 'If it were so private that no one could even suspect it, it would still be awful. Can't you realise that?'

Mr. Pemberton could not. He was thinking chiefly of appearances, not so much about morality. Yet the circumstance that Marie was a wife did continue to influence him. In a way, too, he was pleased that Gladys was so uncompromising on the subject of moral conduct; he could not have

appreciated a condoning attitude toward gravely illicit relations on the part of a young and pretty woman who was his wife.

'I will go over to Morley tomorrow and have a talk with Arthur about this affair,' he decided. 'You are quite right, Gladys; he ought to be ashamed of himself.'

Gladys guessed that Arthur would know that it was she who had put his uncle up to interfere in his private business; but she did not care. She was hurt and angry to the verge of imprudent action; she was cut to the quick; she despised Arthur and she loathed and hated the lithe, impudent, beautiful East Indian who had scorned and defied her as though unalterably certain of her hold upon her man. Both women had understood one another perfectly: they did not need explanations or proofs to convince them of each other's relation to Arthur. Their instinct was swift and sure. Marie felt that Gladys Pemberton regarded her as so much adulterous trash. Gladys was maddened by the conviction that Marie was rejoicing over her, challenging her to a struggle which might only end in a shameful defeat.

The very next day Mr. Pemberton went over to Morley. He took care to get there about lunch-time, and, as he had hoped, he found Marie in the house supervising Arthur's luncheon. A place was immediately laid for him at the table, and after he had lunched and they had gone out on the veranda to smoke, he opened on the subject that had brought him over.

'That's a very good-looking girl you have about here, Arthur. Married, isn't she?'

'You mean Marie Ramsingh?'

'Yes; that's her name, I believe.'

'Yes, she's married.'

'And she is very good-looking.'

'You are a judge of looks, I understand, Uncle Alfred.'

This was not exactly encouraging. It seemed to hint at some secret knowledge. Mr. Pemberton was not really

ashamed of anything in his past, but he did not desire that ancient history should even be distantly hinted at. The higher duty of the social historian, or of the commentator upon morals, was clearly to forget or ignore anything that might refer to the antecedents of distinguished persons.

'I am a pretty good judge, Arthur, and I can tell you that this Marie Ramsingh is stunning. Damned pretty and all that; perfectly fascinating.'

Mr. Pemberton was waxing enthusiastic. He had very closely observed Marie but a little while before and had been more than ever struck with her appearance. He did not doubt now that Arthur had been ensnared by her: who would not be? But of course there were appearances to consider, and Gladys's objections also. He had a duty to perform.

'But do you think, Arthur, that it is exactly wise for you to have her about the house?' he concluded, as one man of the world to another.

'Where is the unwisdom?'

'There is her husband; he cannot like it.'

'He does like it. He is my butler or majordomo; it is he who is really in charge of the Great House, and Marie assists him. You see now, I hope.'

'Do you think that at my age I am a fool, Arthur?'

'Who sent you here to discuss this matter with me?'

'No one; I came of my own accord.'

'Do you think I am a fool, Uncle Alfred?'

'Yes, I do. You are a fool to be carrying on with an East Indian's wife; you are a fool to be sinking down to this sort of life, when you could do much better for yourself; and you are a fool to think you can deceive me as to what this coolie girl is to you.'

Mr. Pemberton spoke warmly. He was not accustomed to being treated like this by his nephew; he was conscious too that he was going rather far, and that of itself inclined him to be angry; anger was a good substitute for a calm

conviction of absolute right. But Arthur was angry too. He had heard about the visit of the day before. Marie had told him, had given him her version of it; had caused it to appear that Gladys had treated her like a dog and then had declined to remain in the house. 'She want you to turn me away,' Marie had said. 'But as she is married to another man, your own uncle, what has she to do with you? I don't interfere with her.'

Arthur had bade the girl be silent; but he had been disturbed by this unpleasant turn of events. Gladys had been there, had seen Marie, had probably guessed more than he had ever wanted her to do; this was humiliating, maddening; he wished that he could find a way of escape from so miserable a situation. In his heart he still craved to please Gladys; but what he had not expected was today's visit from Mr. Pemberton, who had quite evidently come to dictate to him, who had probably been sent by Gladys to exercise over him the authority of an employer. Against this he very definitely revolted. She was to be free to do what she pleased, but he must do what *they* pleased. And why? Because, no doubt, they were thinking of their position, of appearances: that was always in his uncle's mind, and now it would be the same with Gladys, who had married for appearances and for position.

What did they take him for? A nonentity? He would show them.

'What is the object of this conversation?' he asked Mr. Pemberton.

'I want you to give up this young woman.'

'You are asking me to dismiss someone who does my personal work to my satisfaction? I absolutely refuse to do it.'

'By God, boy, do you forget whom you are speaking to?'

'I might ask you the same question.'

'Indeed! But I can dismiss this man, Ramsingh, today, and his wife must go with him. Morley is mine: remember that.'

'So long as I am in charge of Morley you can dismiss no one here who was hired by me. I am responsible. You can dismiss me, of course, but don't forget that I was willing enough to go the other day, and you did not want me to. I can go quick enough now though, and perhaps I had better.'

This was not what Mr. Pemberton had looked forward to. Apart altogether from the fact that Arthur was an excellent attorney, he was the nephew, the only male relative of Mr. Pemberton, and it would surely get about that he had been turned out of his job by his uncle, or had had to resign because of something his uncle had done to him, and then people in the colony would condemn Mr. Pemberton roundly, unless they knew the reason why he and Arthur had parted. But even if they knew the reason there would still be many to say that the older man acted unreasonably, and that he himself had not been above reproach, and Mr. Pemberton did not like to be ill spoken of by people. He was too vain to relish that. Then he was not as young as he used to be, and he felt less able or inclined than before to give that constant, close, personal supervision to the affairs of his plantations that they required; but Arthur could and did look after these affairs as well as he himself could do it, and it would be difficult indeed, perhaps impossible, to replace Arthur. There was also the last and really the greatest consideration. He had loved the boy as a son these many years; the old affection, the long associations, could not easily be dissolved now, not even though a woman had entered very intimately at last into his life. He considered himself strong, he hated to have his will made nothing of. But now that Arthur was laying down an ultimatum he dared to press the young man too far. Someone had to give way. It was better that he should temporise than that he should have anything to regret later on.

'I don't know what the devil you are talking about,' he said; 'you seem to be bent upon clearing out, though nobody

is suggesting that you should, or wants you to go. I am simply trying to keep you out of trouble, and up to your proper position, but if you choose to ignore my advice, well, you can do as you please.'

'That is exactly what I propose to do,' was Arthur's sharp and unnecessary rejoinder.

Mr. Pemberton did not reply. He had backed down as far as he could, and Arthur had not taken this new attitude gratefully or even kindly. He was still inclined to be rude, though he, Mr. Pemberton, showed himself conciliatory. This was a new Arthur, and by no means an admirable one: he had never hurt Mr. Pemberton's pride and vanity like this before. The older man rose and remarked that he was going farther into Portland that afternoon. Would Arthur send for his car? He could not bring himself to offer to shake hands as he left.

'You ought to have insisted that he should get rid of the woman,' was Gladys's comment that evening, when he told her of the result of his mission. 'Even if he had said he would leave your employment. As a matter of fact I don't suppose he would have left. He would probably decide to remain wherever that woman is.'

'Then what would have been the use of my insisting?' asked Mr. Pemberton logically.

'Well, he doesn't think much of you, that's clear,' she retorted, ignoring his question. 'He has defied and insulted you, and all for a coolie girl!'

The stab went home.

'I'll give him cause to regret it,' snarled Mr. Pemberton. 'It did not suit me to go farther today than I did, but I will teach that young cub a lesson he'll never forget to his dying day. I am going to look around for a good man to put in his place, and I shall alter my will this very week. Not a penny he will get when I am dead, not a farthing. I was leaving him Morley and some money, the rest is yours, and it is a good lot. Now he can starve, so far as I am concerned. When

I think of all I have done for that fellow, and of how he treated me today, I feel positively mad. The ingrate! His mother would turn in her grave if she knew what he has become. But I will teach him a lesson. And please never mention his name again in my hearing.'

Mr. Pemberton apparently believed that he disposed of people by commanding that their names should not be mentioned in his hearing, and this had always secretly amused Gladys. But now she knew that he was hurt to the soul and meant even more than he had said. He would disinherit Arthur. And she had been the agent to set his wrath in motion, since she it was who had egged him on to coerce and dominate his nephew.

If outsiders ever heard of the part she had played, they would say that she had plotted to bring about Arthur's ruin for her own aggrandisement, because she wanted all his uncle's property and money, and was jealous of him. Well, she would not care what they thought or said: after all, she deserved everything she would inherit eventually, and she might be a middle-aged woman before she would be free. Her husband might live another twenty years. In half of that time she would have paid again and again for her position and prospects: she was paying dearly now: she had never anticipated so great a price. She was not happy. She was especially unhappy since finding out how unfaithful Arthur was—for she thought of his conduct as unfaithfulness. This was not the sort of life she had pictured for herself, though she knew she had deliberately entered upon it by marrying Mr. Pemberton for what he had to give her.

But perhaps she could change her life somewhat: she would endeavour to induce her husband to go to England to live, during the summer months at any rate; she might find diversion more suited to her temperament; she would seek forgetfulness and excitement. Since they had plenty of money, why should they not spend some of it now; and if she would have all the more because of the disinheriting of

Arthur, why should she regret that for a moment? Her marriage had been a business transaction. Very well, it was good business to get all she could out of her bargain; it would be bad business to lose anything that might legitimately be hers. Her face became hard as she thought; nevertheless there were stirrings of self-contempt in her heart. She knew that her dominant desire was to be revenged on Arthur for taking up with this girl, a girl so utterly below his own station that his act was an intensive insult to one to whom he had professed to be devoted. And the insult was all the deeper, the keener, the more terrible, for that he had been ready that day to give up more for this girl's sake—or so it seemed to Gladys—than he had ever appeared disposed to surrender for *her* sake.

She hardened her heart. Not by one word would she try to dissuade her husband from making Arthur a beggar. She would encourage the old man in his determination against Arthur, should he need encouragement. Arthur deserved nothing better.

'I only hope he will do nothing to disgrace us further,' she said, after they had both communed bitterly with themselves, but for very different reasons.

'You needn't fear that,' said Mr. Pemberton; 'it isn't disgrace that I am worrying about; it is ingratitude and defiance and rank disobedience. There's no particular disgrace in what he is doing.'

'No disgrace in having another man's wife, and a common man's wife, a woman who is only a servant, in his house?'

'Not as he does it. The woman doesn't live in the same place with him, and her husband is equally in charge of the house with her. But don't let us talk about that now. I see your point of view and I agree with it. And Master Arthur will see my point of view when it is too late for him to do anything about it.'

CHAPTER 14

ARUMOUR ran through the coolie village that Marie Ramsingh was no longer in charge of the domestic arrangements of the Great House. She and her husband had come back to the village, and for the past week she had not been up to the Great House once, neither she nor her husband. The other women glanced at her curiously, wondering what had happened. But they knew better than to ask her; they would only have invited a rebuff.

Marie went about, keeping her own counsel, proud, defiant, disdainful, holding her temper in leash, but sometimes letting it slip when her husband said to her anything that rasped on her nerves. She had even, though with an injustice of which she herself was fully conscious, accused him of being the reason why Mr. Norris had said he would no longer require their services, not for a little while at least; she had bitterly suggested that some neglect of his, some stupidity, had brought about this dismissal. She knew it wasn't so, but she had been maddened by the calmness, indeed the satisfaction, with which Ramsingh had accepted the dismissal.

Marie was well aware that it was Gladys Pemberton's influence that had moved Arthur to effect this change. But she would not believe that his resolve would last and she wanted her husband to show that he wished both himself and his wife to continue to be attached to the Great House. She feared that the quiet readiness with which Ramsingh had bowed to the Sahib's decision might have suggested that Ramsingh, much as he loved money, was not eager any more for the position at the Great House. And this might influence Arthur in the future; he might see in it a hint that Ramsingh had latterly not been easy in his mind.

Marie recalled that more than once Arthur had questioned her about her husband, wondering whether Ramsingh might not have grown suspicious. Ramsingh had now acted in a manner to indicate that he was not displeased that the Great House would know him and Marie no more.

Arthur had revolted on the day of Mr. Pemberton's visit against the dictation of his uncle, against what he considered to be the insolent attempt of Gladys to direct his life, after, as he thought bitterly, she had sold herself for property and social position. He felt that he had been easygoing long enough, that at last he must assert himself, must show that he was nobody's man but his own. He had done so; yet with the next day had come reflection and the old feeling of dissatisfaction and shame; self-contempt and self-reproach.

So people were beginning to know, or at any rate to guess; and, above all, Gladys knew. The thought stung him. It was largely the realisation of her knowledge of his present life that had angered him yesterday into defying Mr. Pemberton so violently: Gladys despised him, and when that fact took hold of his mind the result was an assertion of uncompromising independence: he would do as he pleased and all outsiders could go to hell. But the mood died down; and it was with Gladys in his mind that he had intimated to Ramsingh that he would not require his services or those of Marie any longer at the Great House. He shrank from being verbally final in this disruption of relations. He so phrased his words as to let it appear that, later on, the old connexion might be resumed. But he had no intention of resuming it.

He could not avoid an interview with Marie; with her he endeavoured to be diplomatic, mentioning something of what his uncle had said, and suggesting that they had better humour him for the present.

Marie went straight to the point.

'It is not your uncle,' she said very definitely; 'it is his wife. And it is her you sending me away for. She came here and look me up an' down, and she speak to her husband

about you and me, and you do this. An' yet you said you loved me. Do you treat me right?'

He felt he was not treating her rightly; and yet it was not right, either, to continue to have her as his mistress, she was not even a single woman. But he did not attempt to deceive himself; he did not pretend to himself that a sudden high regard for morality was the motive of his present actions. He was in reality doing something which he hoped, if and when she came to hear of it, Gladys would approve; he was striving to reinstate himself in her regard. The leaven of romantic feeling in his nature was working. But he hated to seem like a callous beast in Marie's eyes. That was against his disposition also.

'You doing this to please her,' said Marie. 'What is she going to do for you?'

'She will do nothing,' Marie went on, speaking quietly but tensely. 'You will find that out. She want everything, but she give nothing—that is her sort. And you? You will come back to me. I love you, and I won't let you go. You want me, too! Today you think you can do without me, but you can't; I don't give you a month before we are together again like we have been. Wait and see.'

With that she had turned and left the house, holding her head proudly, lithe and beautiful as ever, her red mantle draping her head and shoulders, and bright as though it had been new-dyed in blood. He felt at once relieved and depressed when that scarlet figure had vanished. He resolved to avoid the vicinity of the coolie village in the future.

He hadn't noticed that Ramsingh seemed quite contented with his dismissal. But Marie had observed it. She had thought, now and then, some time after his quarrel with Das, that her husband gazed at her sometimes with troubled, suspicious eyes if she happened to remain rather long up at the Great House during the day and he became aware of it, or if she suggested after dark that she had to go there to complete some of her work. But she had man-

aged cleverly; he had never been able to lay hold of anything against her. She knew that Ramsingh could hardly, without sufficient reason, inform Mr. Norris that they wished to give up the position at the Great House, since that might be to risk his situation at Morley. Ramsingh's morose and questioning looks, therefore, she had disregarded; and all the more so because she would have welcomed an open breach with him, a separation for ever, if only the Sahib would have agreed to that. Now, seeing that Ramsingh, in spite of his cupidity, did not bewail this change in their fortunes, Marie became convinced that the seeds of suspicion sown some time before by Tom Das had been slowly but certainly germinating in the always distrustful mind of her husband. This clashed with her wish that he himself should endeavour to get reinstated in the position of majordomo.

Marie sensed that the women of the village were discussing her, talking of her never going any more to supervise affairs at the Great House as of one who had suffered a debacle. They did not like her, therefore they would rejoice at this change in her fortunes; in their eyes she had abruptly come down in the world after a very sudden and unmerited elevation. Did they suspect that she had been more than a sort of ordinary housekeeper to the Sahib? She believed that they did; hence they would now see in her a lover rejected and discarded as well as an unfaithful and unworthy wife: one who had fallen as a wife and then had been contemptuously thrown out as a lover. This lacerated a vanity almost insane; to have to endure a taste of the contempt she had shown for others was wormwood, poison, something bitterly intolerable to Marie. She thought of the white woman who had been the cause of all this, the great lady who lived so many miles away. If she could have done so with safety, and the opportunity had offered, Marie would gladly have poisoned the rival who looked down upon her from so ineffable a height of superiority, who thought of her as so

much dirt. She would have killed; she had it in her to kill. But she was impotent for action of that sort. And mere hatred of Gladys Pemberton could not give her back the man for whom she was filled with so wild and devouring a passion.

It was he whom she wanted, above everything to the exclusion of everything else in the world. She must have him back; she would take any risk to get him back. She would rather die than lose him for ever, would die to have him again, if for never so short a time. This she repeated to herself again and again; and sometimes she caught her husband's eyes fixed upon her with a puzzled, probing stare, and then she would return his scrutiny with a look as cold and as piercing, and even threatening. She hated him. But for the fact that to leave him now would necessitate her leaving Morley and the parish of Portland as well, she would desert him. As it was, she must remain.

And Arthur Norris never came to the village now. How then was she to see him?

It was a week since he had seen her. She knew that he had not left the property for a day. No one from the outside world had come to visit him, and by no one she meant one woman only. Surely, then, he must miss her, must long for her, brooding up there all alone. Was he not longing for her as she for him? Was he afraid to send for her? If so, should she be afraid to go to him? Would an opportunity for doing so ever arrive?

A few more days went by, two weeks, then three.

Marie was still waiting, still hoping; but by this time the angry look had faded from her face; with the fatalism of her race she bowed for the time being to the decree of fate; she conquered her impulses, perceiving that she must patiently wait on chance. She went about her ordinary duties as though the Great House did not exist, and Ramsingh ceased to stab her with his eyes in a quest for knowledge. Ramsingh breathed freely again. He could understand anyone's dis-

appointment at a change which meant a definite pecuniary loss: now that his mind was partly relieved he began to appreciate that disappointment. He even wondered now and then if anything in his attitude and behaviour had been the cause of their ejection from a very lucrative post. With the fear for his honour and his morbid jealousy somewhat lulled, the loss to his pocket became poignant. It began to afflict him like a cancer. He could not cease to think of it.

Then to him, one morning, came a message from Mr. Norris; he was to come up to the Great House at noon that day. He said nothing about this to Marie, but obeyed the summons.

Morley could do with a few more East Indian workers, Arthur said to him; and Arthur had just learnt that, owing to the spread of Panama Disease at Clifton Castle, a property about twenty miles distant, the labour force there was to be decreased. There were a dozen coolies on Clifton Castle who would therefore be available for employment. It might be a good thing to hire them for Morley, but a man who knew good workers would be needed to see them and make preliminary arrangements with them. How would Ramsingh like the job?

‘Well, Sahib,’ replied the East Indian, delighted.

‘I thought of going over myself to have a look at these people, but that would hardly do, Maharajah; they would get too stuck up if I did, and demand impossible wages. And you know your own people better than anyone else on Morley. What do you think?’

‘You better not go, Sahib; it wouldn’t do. I will go, quiet-like, and hear what them say. I will tell them I trying to get them work on Morley. That is the best way.’

‘Absolutely. When can you go?’

‘Tomorrow will do, Sahib?’

‘Yes. Do the best you can for me.’

Ramsingh told his wife of his mission; he would set off early on the morrow and be back some time during the day

after the next. A couple of days should suffice for what had to be done.

Marie affected unconcern to hide the sudden joy that surged up in her heart. Did Mr. Norris really need these labourers? Or was this but a ruse to get Ramsingh out of the way for a time? Because she hoped and wished the latter, she believed it.

It was about ten o'clock the following night, and Arthur was sitting in his dining-room, in a favourite old leathern arm-chair, reading, when one leaf of the folding door was quietly pushed open, without any preliminary rap, and a figure swathed in a black mantle glided in. He started: Marie stood before him, her eyes anxious with inquiry, her breast rising and falling quickly with apprehension at her own boldness. She had heard not one word from him during the day, had not seen him, but she had made up her mind to act. More than a month had passed since he had sent her away. She now stood there, alluring as always, and they were alone. If he had missed her half as much as she had missed him, surely she was certain of a welcome.

'You?' he exclaimed.

She nodded her head and drew nearer. She sank on her knees beside the low chair.

'You don't miss me all this time?' she murmured. 'I feel sometimes that I would rather die than go on living like this, without you.'

'You shouldn't have come,' he answered; but even as he spoke he patted her head gently, and she caught his hand and kissed it. He had had no ulterior object in sending Ramsingh out of the property, had expected no visit from Marie; but she was here, and her proximity was very pleasant; it seemed to banish his loneliness and boredom as with a magic touch, and these had indeed been terrible. She had appeared silently, like a shadow . . . Like a shadow she slipped away some hours later before the sun came up.

And early the next morning, before the dawn had dis-

pelled the shades of darkness which shrouded the countryside, before even the cowboys, those earliest of risers on the plantation, had begun to go about their task of tending the cattle, Marie again slipped out of the Great House, after extracting from Arthur a promise to re-employ her and her husband in their old positions, having won what she had hankered after, and turned defeat into victory. She went back to the village brimful of joy, exalted to the skies, triumphant as a conqueror comes. As she silently and quickly entered her own cottage, she saw a man standing in the little living room, a tiny tin kerosene lamp burning on the table by which he stood. She halted, startled.

'Where you coming from, Marie?' demanded Ramsingh, 'and where you bin all night?'

She knew that tone. But startled though she was, overtaken with a guilty surprise, she braced herself for a fight.

'I went to help Mrs. Crutchly,' she said glibly. 'She was having a baby tonight.'

'Miss Crutchly? Where you know her from? Since when you two are frien's?'

'I know her, and I hear yesterday she going to have baby, and I went to see if I could do anything for her. What about it?'

'I will find out if you tellin' a lie.'

'You can find out what you like, and go to hell! If you doubt me, don't ask me any more question.'

She was standing in front of him, her body shaking with the agitation occasioned by finding him at home many hours before he was expected. She thought he might strike her, he looked so ugly; but she felt she would be at least his match in physical strength and his superior in courage. She met his eye boldly, furiously: he could inquire and find out what he liked. She would outface him to the last.

As a matter of fact, on her way to the Great House last night, she had stopped to inquire after Mrs. Crutchly, a brown woman, the wife of a foreman on Morley, who was

momently expecting a baby, and she had remained there for some time, for neither she nor Arthur wished anyone to see her going to the Great House when she had no regular business to take her there. So if Ramsingh did inquire, he would be told that she had been with the expectant woman; only if he pressed his inquisition would anyone trouble to tell him that she had not stayed at Mrs. Crutchly's all night, and his informant would be neither Dr. Croseby, who had seen her there—he had left before she did—nor Mrs. Crutchly, whom Ramsingh would never be allowed to question just now. For the present, then, she felt that she was safe. But she did not feel she would be able to tolerate him very much longer.

Ramsingh controlled himself with a mighty effort. If he struck her, if he even spoke what it was in his mind to speak, there would be an awful scene and all the village would presently be a witness of it; and it might just happen that she had spoken the truth. Indeed, he did not see how she could have dared to lie about the woman with the baby, knowing as she must how easy it would be for him to find out the truth about it. In a few hours he would know; he could wait until then. To act now, with only his suspicions to go upon, might mean the loss of everything, and also his becoming the laughing stock of Morley. He would lose his job, Marie would leave him; and no one would wish to give employment to a man who had so far forgotten himself as to accuse, unjustly, a big white boss of carrying on with his wife. He must wait to find out, finally, the truth.

He was afraid of Mr. Norris. Yet he would not, he could not tolerate his wife's being the woman of Mr. Norris even. Das had meant that; Das had meant to hint, many weeks ago, that when he was away in St. Mary his wife had been with the Sahib, and he had nearly beaten Das for his fiendish suggestion. But he had never quite forgotten it, and now and then he had wondered whether Das knew more than he had said.* And now, this morning, he had returned before

dawn of set purpose, the thought having come to him the night before that perhaps, after all, he should have been more watchful. And with this thought it had flashed through his mind that just as he could change his plan and return to Morley sooner than he was expected, so might Mr. Norris have done so on a former occasion. He had hurried back and had actually found Marie out at that dark hour of the morning. He had arrived but a couple of minutes before her return; had she not come in just then he would have set off to the Great House to prowl about and spy.

And now he would wait a few hours, and he would discover the truth.

Marie waited a while to see what he would do, then flounced away. She must have a talk with Mr. Norris a little later on. She must go to Mrs. Crutchly too; the friends of that woman, who were coloured folk of a substantial farmer type, would wonder why Ramsingh should be questioning people about her. She must enlist their sympathies by telling them how hard a life she led, and how this man allowed her so little liberty. They would sympathise with her and would send him away with a flea in his ear should he venture to ask them anything about her movements. They themselves enjoyed freedom, and she knew that they regarded with a sort of horror the subjection to their husbands in which many of the East Indian women lived.

CHAPTER 15

VERY early that morning Ramsingh rode, on the horse allowed him as a 'timekeeper' on Morley, to the cottage of Mrs. Crutchly, which was situated on the inner side of the road which formed one of the boundaries of Morley. Marie wanted to be there before him; but her husband's brain was working swiftly now, he foresaw her probable movements. But when he got to the house he could only send in a message to inquire how the sick woman was and whether the baby was doing well. And he was obliged to say that he was inquiring for his wife, who, he added distinctly, had been there all that night.

Crutchly himself came out to him and thanked him for his interest. Crutchly was preparing to go out to work, for his wife was in no sort of danger and he was well acquainted with this business of having children. It did not occur to Crutchly to ask Ramsingh to come inside; first, because the East Indian was not by any means a friend, and next, because the only man besides himself who could have any call or place within just now was Dr. Croseby. So Crutchly thanked Ramsingh and said it had been very kind of Mrs. Ramsingh to come round the night before and that Mrs. Crutchly and he had much appreciated it. This corroborated Marie's story in part, but Ramsingh wished to know if Marie had been at this house all night. He opened tentatively, since he could hardly put a direct question.

'My wife stay long here last night.'

'She was very kind to come,' said Crutchly. 'Tell her we hope she will come soon again to see the baby.'

'After sitting up all night she very tired today,' continued Ramsingh.

'Oh, we don't expect her today,' said Crutchly, who was not particularly concerned with Marie's all-night movements and did not grasp that this last assertion was really a feeler intended to elicit information.

Then Ramsingh's eyes travelled into the interior of the little sitting-room at the door of which the sick woman's husband stood, and he noticed Dr. Croseby standing there. The doctor now came forward and interrupted the conversation to say a word or two to Crutchly, and Ramsingh was obliged to withdraw. But he lingered outside until Dr. Croseby came out, then timidly, yet with set purpose, approached the doctor as the latter was about to get into his car.

He deferentially bade the doctor good morning; he was briefly answered. He raised a detaining hand.

'Well, my good fellow, do you want to see me? Anybody sick?'

'No, Doctor; only me wife was here last night an' she stay the whole night . . .'

'Well, did that harm her?'

'No, doctor; but I come to see how the lady and her baby is this morning.'

'And you have heard. But your wife must have told you they were doing very well. What are you anxious about?'

'I not anxious, Doctor.'

'You look as if you were,' returned Dr. Croseby, glancing at Ramsingh more curiously than before. 'You look troubled. Well, there is nothing to worry about; you may tell your wife that.'

The doctor drove away, and Ramsingh trotted off, knowing that any further lingering in the vicinity of the cottage would awaken suspicion of him. It would seem very strange that he should be hanging about after having been told that Mrs. Crutchly and her baby were doing very well. But he was not satisfied. The replies he had received suggested that his wife had indeed been with Mrs. Crutchly all night, yet

he had not asked directly if she had been, and in any case he knew that the doctor could not have been. He must make another approach to the question. In the meantime he must go about his ordinary business, and, a little later, report to Mr. Norris the result of his mission. He went back to the village, and found that Marie was not in the house.

Marie had acted boldly. She knew that Arthur was an early riser; she walked quickly to the Great House, taking the chance of meeting Ramsingh either there or on the way: she was acting openly now, since that was not merely the only, but probably the wisest, course. Arthur was up when a servant came to say that Mrs. Ramsingh wanted to see him; he had Marie sent in to the dining-room.

'Well, what brings you here again so soon?' he asked lightly; then he caught sight of the tense face and a feeling of apprehension seized him.

'Ramsingh come back before four o'clock this morning: I find him in the house when I went in. He ask me where I was all night: I told him with Mrs. Crutchly. He is going to inquire. That is all.'

'All!'

'Yes; all.'

'It is everything, Marie. It is hell.'

'Tcha! He won't see Mrs. Crutchly.'

'But there must have been a nurse and other women.'

'They won't bother to talk to him today; anyhow, I am going from here to see them. Ramsingh, I think, is gone already; it would be the first thing he would do; but I don't see how, with a sick woman in the house, he can question them much; besides, they must be sleeping now or looking after their business, and they wouldn't stop to talk long with him. Anyhow, it can't be helped. We must take the chance.'

'Of a scandal?'

'He can't prove I was here last night: not a soul saw me. Then what is he to say? He couldn't dare say I was with

you, especially if I deny it. He can only suspect, and that don't matter. He been suspecting a long time.'

'Indeed! But you never said anything about that to me. You kept me in the dark.'

'Yes; for I didn't want you to know · you would only worry yourself about nothing. I tell you now because Ramsingh is more suspicious than before. But you can put a stop to everything.'

'I wish you would tell me how,' said Arthur bitterly. He felt dismayed at this miserable turn of affairs.

'Discharge Ramsingh. Then I will leave him. Hire me here as your housekeeper. There is nothing against the law in that, and he will have to put it in his pipe and smoke it.'

'Put it in his pipe and smoke it, eh? You are talking nonsense! How can I discharge a man for nothing at all? And how could I keep his wife when I had sent him away? How would that look? Besides, the law empowers him to go wherever his wife is. Perhaps you don't know that.'

'No, I didn't.' She puckered up her brows and thought. Then her face cleared.

'Sahib, why don't you tell Ramsingh you want him and me back up here, as you promised me last night you would, and then offer him a bigger pay than before, a very big pay? You can afford it, and you would do more for me, if I ask you. Ramsingh love money better than he love me, or anything else in the world. If you pay him enough he will say nothing. He can't say nothing now, for he don't know nothing for sure; but if you give him plenty of money—'

'His suspicions will be confirmed.'

'What about that? He suspect enough already, and it will never get out of his mind now. I know him. An' if you don't do what I say, what can you do?'

'I can send him back to Mapleton, Marie, even if I have to ask Sampson to come here. You can go with him, and then he will have no further reason for suspicion. That seems to me to be the best way.'

'You mean you would send me away from here?'

'I wouldn't put it like that, but—'

'It means the same thing.'

'Well, but—'

'I won't go.'

'Won't go?'

'No; if you treat me badly again I will refuse to go with Ramsingh. But I will tell him openly that you an' me—you know... Then he may leave me, and I will look after myself: I can go back to me father. But he will know, an' everybody else will know, and I won't care. I love you. *And I am not giving you up so easy.*'

He stared at her stupefied. Yet even as he did so it came to him that she was acting as he ought to have expected her to act; for this attitude was of a piece with her disposition, was the stand which he should have known she might take at any moment. She had gone away quietly some weeks ago, very quietly. But that was because she believed he would take her back. Now that he proposed an end forever to their relations and her departure from the plantation, she was rebelling and was prepared to fight. She was quite fearless, regardless of consequences. It came to his mind that there was much of the tigress in her, the tigress which stalked through the jungles of the ancestral India she had never seen, and which could be so merciless in attack.

'Hire Ramsingh up here again,' he heard her saying, as he stared in mingled wrath and perplexity at her. 'Pay him well. He believe I am his property, so he will want money for me. He is a poor, worthless beast!'

So she turned and left him, a prey to indescribable emotions.

He went into his office but he could concentrate his mind on nothirg. He told himself that the sordid crisis he had always feared had come at last.

An hour or so afterwards he was told that Ramsingh had returned from Clifton Castle and wished to see him. He

sent out to say that Ramsingh must come back later; after lunch, about two o'clock: he could not see him now. He knew he would have to face the probably infuriated East Indian, but there was time enough for that. Meanwhile he must try to think out something. But what was there save Marie's cynical and even revolting plan? And what was the alternative to the adoption of that plan except exposure by herself? But suppose Ramsingh refused? What then would Ramsingh do?

A scene? Separation? Divorce? Did these things threaten? But the East Indian loved money. That was his ruling passion, his besetting sin. Well, if money could save the situation it would be poured out freely enough.

At about one o'clock Dr. Croseby dropped in, 'for a spot of lunch,' he said. The doctor had many patients in this neighbourhood, and no fewer than three childbirth cases to attend to just now. As the District Medical Officer, with a Government subsidy, his services were in wide demand; he was an efficient practitioner too and was liked for his genial manner and the interest he showed in his patients. He was Arthur's doctor; but above all he was a friend of Arthur's and an old crony of Mr. Pemberton's. He could come and go at Morley and Mapleton as he pleased.

The two men went to lunch; Arthur much preoccupied, as Dr. Croseby observed. But the doctor said nothing. Arthur, too, had not only a cocktail, in which the doctor would not indulge, but three whiskies to Dr. Croseby's one. Arthur was usually abstemious in working hours. Of a surety, thought Dr. Croseby, something must be the matter.

Lunch over, a servant came in to tell Mr. Norris that Ramsingh had returned as instructed and was waiting to be seen. Arthur thought a moment, wondered whether he should see this man in his office but decided that he might come to the dining-room. The doctor offered to go, but Arthur, hospitably, would not hear of it. Only a little matter of business, he said; it would be over in a few minutes.

Ramsingh, after all, would not dare to make any rash accusations on the strength of a mere suspicion, thought Arthur, to whom the whisky imbibed had afforded resolution.

'By the way, Arthur,' said the doctor genially (for he had enjoyed his lunch), 'what has become of the pretty coolie girl who was here some time ago?'

'She left for a while, but I am thinking of getting her and her husband back,' said Arthur. 'Ramsingh is the husband, you know.'

Ramsingh came in. The doctor knew him for the man who had been around the Crutchly's cottage that morning, making inquiries. He was dressed as he had been earlier in the day; khaki trousers stuffed into a well-worn pair of top-boots, a khaki jacket, under which showed plainly a scarlet shirt. He held a broad-brimmed jippi-jappa hat in his hand. His manner was respectful, but morose. He seemed under some sort of tension. There was a look about his eyes which caused the doctor to stare at them curiously. Dr. Croseby also noticed that Ramsingh's hands were twitching.

He told his story. He had been to Clifton Castle; he had seen the overseer there and had been allowed to interview some of the coolies. They would be available for employment at Morley at any time now. And they would be willing to accept the wages usually paid at Morley.

'A very good piece of work, Ramsingh,' said Arthur, with an effort at warm appreciation. 'You must charge your expenses at the end of the week, and we must make you a little present. You have done splendidly. I am going to give you twenty pounds for this job.'

Dr. Croseby lifted his eyebrows. This was generosity indeed. Ordinarily such work as the East Indian had done would be considered as part of his regularly remunerated duties. What could be the matter with Arthur?

Ramsingh's eyes gleamed for a moment. 'Thank you very much, Sahib,' he said; 'you very kind.'

Then he seemed to grip his courage with both hands. 'How is Miss Crutchly now please, Doctor?' he asked, though this was not the place for such personal inquiries.

'As she was when you asked this morning, Ramsingh,' said the doctor: 'did you expect any change?'

'No, sir; my wife was there with her all night last night . . . the whole night . . .'

'Yes?'

'You, too, Doctor; my wife see you . . .'

'I do not usually remain all night with my patients,' said the doctor coldly; 'as for your wife, she—'

He paused suddenly. This man, it was now so evident, was seeking for information about his wife's whereabouts last night, while seemingly making assertions. It was all quite clear: but why this method? The doctor noticed that Ramsingh was gazing furtively at Arthur; he noticed constraint in Arthur's countenance. Was Marie Ramsingh really at Mrs. Crutchly's during all last night? He knew that the nurse had been, and another woman, they were there now. And if Marie Ramsingh had been there also, surely he would have heard of it. He saw; he saw everything plainly. And he felt that he must speak in such a way as to dissipate the man's dangerous doubts.

'As for your wife,' he resumed deliberately, 'she mustn't let her sympathy and kindness deprive her of the rest that she may need. Tell her not to sit up again all night with a sick person unless she absolutely must; tell her I say so. She had better get a few hours' sleep today.'

Was it a look of relief that he saw on the East Indian's face? The doctor hoped so. He hoped the incident of Marie's whereabouts last night was now closed.

Arthur seemed relieved also, distinctly. Dr. Croseby had apparently confirmed Marie's explanation as to where she had been last night, and who would dare question his word? Arthur's spirits rose, then fell immediately as he remembered that Marie had resolved that she would not leave Morley;

more, he believed she would come again to the Great House as she had done on this occasion. Well, there was one way out, her own plan. If Ramsingh should refuse his offer of reinstatement as majordomo, events would have to take their course. If he accepted, that would demonstrate that there was no trouble to be expected from him, no trouble, that is, that money could not meet. It would have come, practically, to the buying and selling of a woman—a miserable business. It made him, as purchaser, feel contemptible.

Arthur made up his mind to speak at once. This was as good an opportunity as any, particularly as Ramsingh had just completed a satisfactory piece of work for the plantation and his reinstatement might look like additional reward.

‘See here, Maharajah,’ he said, casually as it were, ‘you used to serve me very well in this house, and I miss your help and Marie’s now. As you see, too, I haven’t got a new man and the servants are doing what they like. Would you like to come back to the Great House?’

‘Me alone, Sahib?’

‘Well, both of you. If only one did I should still have to get another person. Besides, you both work well together.’

‘What do Marie say, Sahib?’

‘Marie? Why, I haven’t asked her. You are the one to decide, isn’t it?’

‘So you say, Sahib.’

‘So I think. I tell you what, Maharajah; I will give you a pound a week more than I did, and I will raise Marie’s pay too. How is that?’

What in the devil’s name was this? thought Dr. Croseby. It was not payment; it was a bribe. Anyone could see that. And again the doctor fixed his eyes intently on Ramsingh’s face.

The East Indian, conscious of that scrutiny, held down his head as if in thought. Arthur waited anxiously for his reply. Arthur felt deeply humiliated, like one forced to traffic in obscene things. He knew he was bribing this

avaricious little man, and he was ashamed of that and of the reasons behind the action: he was sure it couldn't last, this sordid deception, this disgusting intrigue. He must end it; he would, even if he had to clear out of Morley and go to Canada as he had once intended. That instant he resolved that he would end it, and soon, but for the moment the situation must be met, the immediate difficulty dealt with. Ramsingh, meanwhile, still seemed to think.

At length—

'Thank you, Sahib,' he said.

'You take the job, then?' said Arthur, striving to keep his voice from expressing jubilation.

'Yes, Sahib.'

'Then when can you and Marie take charge? You will have, of course, to remove again from the village into the cottage near here. Your old cottage. It is still untenanted.'

'We can come whenever you want, Sahib.'

'Tomorrow, then. You can borrow one of the trucks to remove your things.'

'Thank you, Sahib.'

The man bowed and went out, stolidly, not showing any joy at his better pecuniary prospects. He was already down the steps when Dr. Croseby said suddenly—

'I want to say something to Ramsingh, Arthur. Just a word. Will you excuse me?'

He did not wait for the reply, but walked quickly after the East Indian, overtaking him in a minute.

'Look here, Ramsingh,' he said quietly, staring into the East Indian's eyes, 'don't you know that ganga will drive you mad?'

'Ganga, Doctor?' There was a note of fear in Ramsingh's voice. 'I don't know nothing about it.'

'You can't lie to me, Ramsingh; I know too much about you people to be deceived by you in this—and too much about ganga too. You have been smoking today; I can see it in your eyes. Stop it. You know, I suppose, that, apart from

everything else, you would be severely punished by a judge if he knew you had been using ganga?

'I don't use no ganga, Doctor,' replied Ramsingh sullenly.

'You are a liar. You have been smoking it for some time. Now I warn you, stop it. Do you hear? Stop it.'

Dr. Croseby waited for no answer, but returned to Arthur, whose manner now was very different from what it had been an hour before. Arthur looked like one from whose shoulders a grievous burden had been miraculously removed. The doctor it was who looked grim and thoughtful.

CHAPTER 16

IT WAS about a week after Gladys and Mr. Pemberton had paid their visit to Morley, with Mr. James Cuthbert, that Lady Mugsley came to spend a few days at Mapleton. Lady Mugsley had been invited some time before by the Pembertons; they had hardly expected an acceptance but had thought the chance well worth taking. The Governor's wife, however, who sincerely liked Gladys, had written to say that, if convenient to the Pembertons, she would be able to go to stay with them for about a week. She had never spent so long a time in anybody's house in the colony; naturally, therefore, this visit was considered a high honour and a notable social distinction. It was chronicled in the papers. It was commented upon in various social circles; in some of these, with remarkable bitterness.

Lady Mugsley and Sir Arthur had been in the colony just a little under two years; perhaps that was why, said the critics, Sir Arthur had not yet found out that Mr. Pemberton was a fool. These persons forgot that Mr. Pemberton and the Governor met fairly often in the Privy Council, where Mr. Pemberton's usual agreement with His Excellency could not possibly be interpreted by the latter as rank folly. As for Lady Mugsley, though she felt that a Governor's wife should not show preferences definitely, she was of a sufficiently independent disposition to please herself as to how she should spend her holidays. So to the Pembertons she went.

She passed a pleasant week with them, during which time Mr. Pemberton and Gladys were too much occupied, and, if the truth must be told, too exalted, to give much thought to Arthur and his affairs. Had they been on good terms with Arthur, he would of course have been invited; as it was, they

held no communication with him. But a few distinguished persons were invited to meet Lady Mugsley at Mapleton, and picnics and excursions were arranged, and the island heard of these through newspaper correspondents. Mr. Pemberton began to look years sprightlier. Nothing was such a tonic to him as close association with the great.

Inevitably the Beavershams heard of these things, and Mrs. Beaversham pondered them in her heart. They kept Mr. Beaversham awake at nights too, he could not help thinking about them. What puzzled Hazel was that in none of the accounts of the entertainments given by the Pembertons was Arthur's name ever mentioned. This seemed to indicate that, as her father and mother had so plainly stated to her, Arthur was now definitely down and out. She felt sorry for him, but she did not allow his downfall to worry her greatly.

Lady Mugsley left Mapleton and returned to Kingston; and the report went about that the Pembertons would very shortly be coming up to Delva for a week or two. There they would receive their guests, and of course there would be a dance for the young people. And now that Lady Mugsley had stayed with them, and Gladys might at any time be spending some days at King's House, it was quite evident that those persons not asked to a Pemberton ball might be considered as not in the very inner circle of society—a very terrible situation indeed.

Mr. and Mrs. Beaversham were sitting on their veranda one Sunday afternoon, she with a novel in her hand, he with a newspaper over which he glanced casually. They knew one another's moods, did this couple, and Mrs. Beaversham was well aware that something was on her husband's mind which he wanted to tell her, though hesitating as to how she might take it. She waited patiently, for she knew that he would bring it out at length.

'Do you know who I saw in town yesterday?' he said at last, laying down the news sheet.

'No; who was it?'

'Pemberton. He had run up to Kingston on a little business. I met him near Barclays Bank in Harbour Street.'

'Well, and what had he to say for himself—you spoke, I suppose?'

'Oh, yes; we always pass a word or two when we meet' (the truth being that of late Mr. Beaversham never neglected to have a conversation with his erstwhile friend whenever they were within speaking distance of one another).

'And I suppose he was full of Lady Mugsley and her visit to Mapleton; bored you to death with it?'

'He was full of it, of course; you know what a snob Pemberton is. But I didn't mind listening to him, for, after all, for over twenty years before this woman came we were friends. I used to like him immensely, and he was very fond of you too. I must say that I miss his company sometimes.'

'Well, it wasn't our fault that we ceased being friends.'

'I know that; yet it is a pity that things should have fallen out as they have. It only shows that you can be certain of nothing in this world.' His tone suggested that the occurrence of the unexpected constituted for him a serious grievance against fate or nature or whatever it might be that controlled events.

'No, you can be certain of nothing,' agreed his wife; 'I have noticed that all my life. Did Alfred say anything about his wife?'

'Only that she was quite well and would be up here next week. I said that the change would do her good.'

'How did he take that?'

'You mean . . . ?'

'I mean, did he seem pleased at your showing some interest in her? We have kept ourselves aloof from them, you know, ever since I noticed that she was inclined to be uppish. We were polite to them after their marriage; I always made it a point to bow to her when we met, and

I would have called upon her but I saw she was giving herself airs. Then I dropped her, of course.'

There was a note of injury in Mrs. Beaversham's voice; she spoke as a person who had tried to be kind to some erring one who was not quite worthy, and had only been rudely treated for her pains.

'You have to make allowances, my dear,' murmured Mr. Beaversham sympathetically; 'the poor young woman never had many advantages. There are people you must forgive, you know; after all, forgiveness is a divine injunction.'

'But does she look or speak as if she wanted our forgiveness; does Alfred give any suggestion of that?'

The question was asked with some eagerness. Mrs. Beaversham's manner suggested one who was bursting with a desire to forgive her enemies, or, rather, one particular enemy, and to forget everything that had occurred, even to the point of denying that anything unpleasant had ever occurred.

'Well, you could hardly expect him to say anything; remember, the woman is his wife. But he was genuinely glad to see me, said how very seldom we met now-a-days, and all that sort of thing. That, I think, shows a great deal.'

It was quite true that Mr. Pemberton had greeted his former friend cordially. Mr. Pemberton was feeling very cordial towards all men just then, was full of peace and of goodwill to humanity. He did enjoy meeting Beaversham: it was something to remark (Oh, quite casually) what an excellent woman Lady Mugsley was, how simple and easily pleased, and how she had forced Gladys to promise she would go to King's House for a week in November. And to this was added, naturally, that both the Pembertons would be in the Governor's party at the next race meeting, and then Mr. Pemberton had hinted that Sir Arthur himself thought of going down to Mapleton for a week-end shortly; which Sir Arthur may have thought, though certainly he had mentioned to no living person what was in his mind, a

circumstance proving that Mr. Pemberton possessed many of the qualities of a clairvoyant. Mr. Pemberton, in fact, had been so pleased to be able to boast to Mr. Beaversham, and to show how easily the Beavershams had been passed in the race for social success, that he warmed towards Mr. Beaversham and actually felt towards him as in the days of old. He pressed his hand on leaving and called Beaversham, 'old fellow'. His previous relations with Mr. Beaversham had almost been resumed.

'He has come to his senses, has he? Well, I hope his wife has,' observed Mrs. Beaversham severely.

'We must make allowances for her,' insisted Mr. Beaversham, repeating his generous observation of a few minutes before. 'She must have got used to her position by now and become sensible. That is why I don't think we should let her suffer for her early folly. You can afford to be gracious, Arabella.'

Mrs. Beaversham assumed an attitude of graciousness. She became graciousness personified. Uppermost in her mind at that moment was a picture of the next Pemberton ball at Delva, at which the Governor and his wife were certain to be present, and all the leading persons in society—except the few whom Gladys hated and would strive to hurt. Amongst these the Beavershams occupied first place. In such circumstances, surely a woman of the world should be prepared to forgive and be gracious, not seven times, but seventy times seven.

She did not deceive herself; it is a very difficult matter to deceive oneself. But she strove to deceive her husband as to some of her own acts and their meaning, and he did precisely the same. These people actually posed to one another, struck attitudes of dignity or of injured innocence; they hardly ever spoke outright about their conduct towards others and their reasons for it. If they insulted other folk, as they had insulted Gladys, they found an excuse to give to one another, though together they had previously plotted

the affront: the fault was the other person's, or there had been some misunderstanding, or something. Everybody else might be a snob or a cad—they were very free with these words—but they were themselves the just man and woman made perfect. Perhaps in this there was a striving after the preservation of self-respect; this posturing to one another may have had its better side in a desire that each should not clearly admit to contemptible actions even in the close privacy of their intimate lives: maybe they wished to save their faces. But it led to ludicrous lying, though the comic side of such lying was never apparent to their own consciousness.

'They will be at Delva very shortly,' continued Mr. Beaversham.

'So I understand.'

'It would be kind if you were to call formally on them, you and Hazel; if you held out the olive branch . . .'

'But suppose they were to refuse it?'

A shiver went through Mr. Beaversham, a shiver of anguished apprehension. The same thought had occurred to him. To have a Beaversham olive branch rejected would be an insult hardly to be borne; and yet, just possibly, the thing might happen. But he fought down the idea; it suggested an inferiority complex, which would be a disgrace to a family in the habit of asserting its superiority. Besides, what is worth having is worth striving for, insult or no insult.

'They would never dare,' he laughed uneasily; 'they are not fools.'

Mrs. Beaversham detected the falseness of his mirth; yet she too felt that risks must be taken in the social world.

'I imagine not,' she agreed. 'Very well, I will call on them when they are back at Delva. I can never forget what close friends Alfred and you and I were.'

So when the Pembertons went back to Delva, Mrs. Beaversham and Hazel, on the afternoon when Gladys was 'at home', formally called with cards and were ushered into the

drawing-room, where they found several old friends and acquaintances. Dr. Mayland, knowing well how the land lay, raised slightly interrogatory eyebrows and was secretly amused. Mrs. Smith-Parsley wondered if the Pembertons and Beavershams were going to be friends once more. Gladys was eminently polite, formally polite, in a manner of speaking she was much too polite. She was genuinely surprised to see Mrs. Beaversham and Hazel in her house, glad of it in a way, for she did not for a moment imagine that they could seriously think that *they* were recognising and accepting her at long last. Indeed, she guessed accurately the reason of this visit. Lady Mugsley had much to do with it. And then, of course, there was the ball.

It was Dr. Mayland who in the course of a general conversation mentioned the ball; Gladys had told her that the invitations would be out in a day or two.

'You are having a large crowd, Gladys?' asked Miss Mayland, who took the privilege of a close friend to ask the question.

'About a hundred and fifty people, allowing for those who won't be able to come.'

'A big affair, and it's going to be very enjoyable; all your parties are.'

'Thanks, Jane. You will help me, I know, to entertain.'

'I will do my best, anything to be useful. As I look like becoming an old maid, I had better begin to devote my life to service!'

'You are not going to be an old maid, unless you choose to be, and you are always serving other people; I have never known you otherwise,' laughed Gladys. 'But I want you to dance and enjoy yourself, too, and not to be only a hostess at my dance.'

She did not continue on the theme; every woman there knew that she would receive an invitation; everybody except the Beavershams. Truth to tell, they had not guessed that the invitations were going to be sent out so shortly; they felt

uncomfortable on hearing the news. It would look as if they had called in the hope of being invited, which happened to be largely the truth. However, there was no help for it now; so they made themselves as sociable as they could in the circumstances, stayed for half an hour, and when they bade Gladys good-bye they pressed her to come and see them soon. They showed by their manner that they wished bygones to be bygones, that they were anxious that the dead past should not only be dead but obliterated. Gladys thanked them for their pressing invitation, while thinking it strange that people who were so perfect in the ways of society should not have left it to her to return their call without so earnestly suggesting an early visit. She smiled as she perceived that their desire to be friendly was as marked, and as disgusting, as their former determination to be rude.

A couple of days after this her invitations went out, and none was received by the Beavershams.

It was in the seclusion of their bedroom, after waiting for three extra days to see if any invitation was coming, that Mrs. Beaversham said to her husband:

‘I see that that shopkeeper woman is leaving us out; it is quite clear that she intends to be rude and impertinent.’

‘Our time will come,’ promised Mr. Beaversham: ‘one generally gets even with people of her sort: these upstarts never see far enough ahead.’

‘I can wait,’ said Mrs. Beaversham, ‘and if I get a chance to pay her back for her insolence—!’

But it is hard to be patient while your contumacious enemy, a woman you were prepared to forgive for not having done you anything and for having been insulted by you, is entertaining the representative of royalty and the cream of society. To find yourself an outsider, after you have been prepared to take a real outsider to your heart—then indeed you know that there is something worse than the sting of death and more bitter than the victory of the grave. Meanwhile, one night at Delva, the orchestra played for the

dancing of scores of couples, and the fun was exhilarating, and the Governor and his wife were gracious and in the best of spirits, and Mr. Pemberton and Gladys were genuinely pleased. James Cuthbert was among the guests. After having entertained Lady Mugsley for a whole week at Mapleton, Mr. Pemberton could not feel the slightest objection to James. When he had seen Cuthbert's name in the list Gladys and he had gone over prior to the sending out of the invitations he had passed it without a word or look of objection. Gladys had known that he would. She had included James Cuthbert, since not to have done so would have been an insult without even the shadow of an excuse.

The ball was not completely over until the sun had almost risen above the hills to the east of Delva. It was a thoroughly weary but satisfied couple that walked up to their bedroom to snatch a few hours' sleep. Gladys had not danced with James once, but she had been the Governor's partner twice. Mr. Pemberton had stood and watched His Excellency steer his wife in and out of a maze of dancers, and his heart had beaten high with pride. There were no heights to which she, with him for husband, could not rise. That was clearly demonstrated now.

It was not yet nine o'clock in the morning when a servant came to the bedroom door, knocking imperatively. A telegram had just arrived; it had evidently been rushed. Mr. Pemberton opened it and exclaimed—

'Good God!'

'What is the matter?' cried Gladys.

'Arthur! Something is seriously wrong with him, it seems. This is from Dr. Croseby; it must have been written last night and sent to the telegraph office very early this morning—you know what that means.'

Gladys took the paper from his shaking hand and read:

'Dreadful occurrence here. Arthur concerned. Come over at once. Croseby.'

'Arthur! I wonder if he is killed.'

'It doesn't say that,' said Gladys; 'it only says that Arthur is concerned. Shall I order the car for you?'

'Yes, the roadster. You come over later in the sedan, if you possibly can. What can be the matter?—I feel that Arthur is dead.'

His voice broke, and Gladys, white-faced, helped him to get ready quickly. She kept a grip upon herself, but in her mind also the awful question framed itself incessantly: 'Arthur—is Arthur dead?'

In a very few minutes, after gulping down a cup of coffee, Mr. Pemberton was on his way to Mapleton, two hours later Gladys too had set out. But she had remembered that James Cuthbert had said the night before that he was going over to St. Mary that forenoon, and as she did not wish to travel by herself all that journey, to meet she knew not exactly what at the end, she had telephoned to James and asked him if he could take her over to Mapleton. He had come up for her gladly. He was a friend upon whom, she instinctively felt, she could rely. And her husband, now, could have no objection to him.

CHAPTER 17

IT WAS two days since Ramsingh had moved back into the cottage he had occupied as majordomo of Morley Great House; he had informed Marie of his reinstatement calmly, and she, acting a part to oblige Arthur, had received the news as unemotionally. She resumed her duties in the house at once, as though she had never suspended them. She found things in a state of confusion, with the servants doing much as they pleased and helping themselves to the Squire's food in the sure and certain hope of non-discovery by him. She put an end to all this immediately.

But Ramsingh himself went only once to the Great House and he said nothing about it or its master, or Marie's duties there. He said nothing. Never had he been loquacious; now he seemed as though he had been stricken dumb.

The night of the second day Marie was at her post seeing that Arthur's dinner was properly served. From seven to eight was dinner-time; after the table was cleared she prepared to go home, whispering to Arthur that she hoped to be able, on some good excuse, to return later for a little while. He shook his head negatively.

'You had better be careful,' he said.

'Tcha!' she laughed. 'You seeing ghosts. It is all right now.'

She ran over to her cottage, and cried out her husband's name. There was no answer. She looked into the bedroom, thinking he might be asleep. He was not in it. She went to the door and called loudly. Silence. He might have gone to the coolie village, she thought, or perhaps even to some creole village outside of Morley. He sometimes did. Perhaps, then, she could slip back to the Great House. She would

wait until certain that the house servants had gone to their quarters, and then she would go over for a while. Even if Ramsingh should return before she got back she would have her usual excuse about having forgotten something.

Marie knew that this excuse was wearing thin; yet tonight it would serve very well. Besides, though she was well aware that Ramsingh was suspicious, and more than suspicious, he had deliberately accepted reinstatement in the Great House, at a wage which must seem to him magnificent; and he could be in no doubt as to the reason why he was being remunerated so handsomely. Then there was his salary as 'time-keeper' or gang boss, and also Marie's earnings as his help at the Great House. She herself laughed at this, for she knew she could have what she wanted. But it was not money she thought of now. It was the man, the sahib, Arthur Norris.

Ramsingh would expect further bonuses or presents, and he would get them. He would make money quickly now, as he had always wished to do. She smiled contemptuously as she thought of this.

Ramsingh loved gold, land, material possessions; he saved everything he could, though he had stinted her nothing. But then she had helped him greatly, for she had her father's ability to see opportunities and to put them to good service. Even Ramsingh, for all his old-fashioned, Oriental ideas about women, did not deceive himself into thinking he would have done so well financially without Marie's help. He lent money quietly to the workers at Morley, but it was lent in Marie's name; it was she who transacted the business. They had begun to sell cloth and haberdashery on the instalment plan to the people around; that also was Marie's idea. Ramsingh, she argued, must have guessed by this what would be his loss if he interfered with her freedom of movement. And though he had seemed disposed to do so three or four days ago, when he had returned from Clifton Castle suddenly: and found her out in the early hours of the morning, he had since then subsided into dull acquiescence. Gold

had quieted his jealousy. And he would hope for more and still more of it.

Her lips curled in scorn as she thought of him. Fancy to prefer money to her! What a low-minded beast! Yet, though she scorned him for it, she was glad of it, for she detested his very presence. She was delighted at a settled and understood arrangement at last, for that gave her liberty to love Arthur almost without concealment. Nevertheless there must be some concealment; the Sahib insisted upon it; Ramsingh, too, would think of his position and reputation among the coolies and creoles of the plantation: he would not have his wife traffic openly with his master. She must act so as to save his face, unless she intended to break openly and finally with him (which Mr. Norris would not like), she must pretend even to him that she was merely a chief help at the Great House, nothing more.

As she sat in her little sitting-room, thinking and waiting, waiting to go back to Arthur, she thought she detected a peculiar odour, a scent reminiscent of something she had known before, but not so familiarly that she could readily detect and name it now. The odour was faint, as though it came from far away: vaguely illusive. It tantalised her memory; then it awoke in her a queer feeling of disquietude. As the aroma of incense will linger in a church long after a service is ended and the censer has grown cold, so this odour floated upon the air as though it had been stronger in the room before. But nothing was burning. She looked about her keenly so as to detect any scrap of paper or rag of cloth that might be smouldering. Nothing. And, anyhow, this peculiar smell, though so faint, was not to be confused with the scent of ignited cloth or paper.

It was half-past nine. She arranged on the table some food she had brought with her after dinner from the Great House; that would show Ramsingh, if he should return before she did, that she had not remained up there all the time with Mr. Norris, but had come back to the cottage. And

since she might not be away for more than half an hour, she took her scarlet mantle instead of the black one, which might suggest too plainly a desire for sombre concealment.

She got to the Great House just in time to find Arthur preparing to go out. He was in the little room he used as an office, selecting a walking-stick. Its window opened on a patch of garden to the south.

'You going out?' she asked in surprise, for she had hinted to him not long since that she might presently be back.

'Yes, Marie, for a walk. I am not feeling very bright; a slight headache.'

'But I told you I was coming.'

'You weren't quite certain. And, anyhow, I should prefer you not to remain tonight. You and Ramsingh have just come back, you see. You have told me he knows—'

'And don't care.'

'I am not so sure of that. Besides I care, and that is something. At least you might try to be careful.'

She narrowed her eyes, her face flushed with anger.

'You beginning all that foolishness again?' she cried. 'I thought we had finished with it long ago. I *am* careful, but perhaps what you mean is that I am to stay away altogether, though you know I won't. Or perhaps you don't want me here now because you going out to see another girl! That may be it, eh?' She scanned his face keenly, then laughed. 'No; that is not it. You are only nervous, Sahib—and afraid.'

'Yes,' he replied very simply, 'I am afraid.'

'Of Ramsingh?' (scornfully).

'You know quite well I am not afraid of the man in any physical sense, but I am not satisfied about how he takes this—you and me, Marie.'

'The same old thing,' she said wearily; 'always the same thing. So you going out?'

'Yes.'

'For long?'

'No.'

'Then I will wait for you.'

'Why?'

'Just to talk a little before I go back and go to bed. You say you won't be long, an' if you know I am waiting I am sure you will hurry back.'

'And Ramsingh?'

'He's not at home. He is gone to the coolie village or somewhere else; he mightn't come back till twelve. But I won't be so late here, if you come back soon. I didn't come here to stay long. I didn't come for anything. But you can't treat me so badly as not to see me or talk to me at all, so I will wait here if you go out, no matter if Ramsingh know I am here and want to raise hell about it. I am prepared meself, as I told you before, to tell him everything and let him do what he like. I only don't do it because you don't like it. But—'

'Quite so, Marie. It has come to this that I must do what you wish or be openly scandalised. But, remember, it will matter more to you than to me.'

'What happen to me won't matter at all if I am to lose you,' she answered passionately, looking at him with eyes that held in their depths possibilities of self-immolation of which he had never dreamt. 'I make up my mind. I am prepared for anything, even death, if I am not to have you. You understand now?'

He remained silent for a space, moved in spite of himself. He knew that her speech was no mere melodrama, that she meant it literally. That things should have come to this! That such a situation should have developed from a furtive kiss; such a mountain of sinister consequence from so little a grain of wrong!

'Don't wait tonight,' he said to her kindly. 'Perhaps I shall be longer out than I think. Better go back home, Marie, and then tomorrow we'll talk. I really have a headache, and I am worried and want to think alone. You will do what I want, won't you?'

There was no mistaking his sincerity; she saw too that his brow was troubled, that in his eyes was a worried, hunted look. She came nearer to him.

'All right, Sahib,' she said softly, 'I will go. I don't want to make you unhappy. I love you; don't you know I love you?'

'Yes, I know that, Marie.'

'Kiss me.'

He kissed her. He was grateful for this flash of intuitive understanding on her part; this yielding when, but a moment before, she had threatened battle. She was very gentle now. And the kiss that passed between them conveyed to each of them something of the other's finer feeling. She left the house silently; in a couple of minutes he too went forth on his walk.

She made no haste to get back to her cottage. She was thinking, thinking deeply, for she felt that a grave change was approaching in her relations with Arthur. He was no longer the same. Something had happened within him; he was fighting against her influence; he no longer wanted her; or rather, though he did want her, he was sick of the intrigue, the necessary concealment, the sordidness and humiliation of having, if only even in his mind, to stoop to please and bribe and humour Ramsingh.

She understood him better than he thought she did. She possessed a brain far more acute than anyone had ever credited her with; and she had her woman's intuitions, intuitions based upon trifling indications, and on lightning-like conclusions from these; intuitions not to be explained, or even understood, by those to whom they come, but nevertheless striking home to the truth as a bullet aimed by a marksman goes straight and direct to its mark.

How could she hold him, for he was slipping from her? What should she do? What could she do?

She paused in her slow walk back to her cottage to glance upwards in a spasm of despair which suddenly seized her.

From the vast inverted bowl, scintillating a faint blue in the light of myriads of stars, there 'came no inspiration to her. The black mood of despair which so swiftly and inexplicably had seized her, filling her with foreboding, constricting her heart, and causing her to tremble as one possessed, seemed to grow blacker. She wondered whether she would go mad if Arthur Norris sent her away, or went away himself—for that, she knew, he might do if there were no other way of escape for him.

Turning these things over in an embittered mind, she came to her cottage and found Ramsingh standing in the little room which she had left but a little while before.

She said nothing to him, offered no explanation as to where she had been. He asked her nothing. He merely asserted:

'You coming from the Great House.'

'Yes,' she said, as stating a very ordinary and expected fact.

'You went up there and try to get the Sahib to make love to you.'

'Is that so?'

His back was resting against the table on which was still set out the food she had placed there before going up to the Great House. She stood in the middle of the room. She knew that this was to be the struggle between them that she had thought averted for ever, but which, in the past, she had taught herself to expect and had determined to meet boldly, to emerge from it unequivocally triumphant. It had come at last. But now he seemed a pitiable object to fight; her conflict might soon have to be with the Sahib himself. What this little man might say or do was really of small consequence in the light of the swiftly developing and threatening situation between herself and her white lover.

'It is so,' said Ramsingh heavily. 'And the other night when you say you was with Miss Crutchly, you was with him most of the time. I ask questions yesterday. Miss

Crutchly's servant say you only stay there that night about one hour, and somebody up at the Great House know you was there nearly all night, and tell me about it today, when I ask.'

'Yes?'

'Yes. You think people don't see you when you come an' go; but the servant at the Great House been watching you. They know more than you imagine. And they talk. That is how I come to find out, though I did suspect it before. Then there is tonight.'

He seemed to know everything, especially about the Crutchly business: he had probed that affair until he reached the truth. He was speaking now like one holding himself in with a tremendous effort. His eyes were bloodshot, his limbs twitching. She too felt shivers running through her body. She too was tensed. But she, like him, spoke calmly. The hush before the earthquake.

'You just coming from there,' he continued; 'he wouldn't wait with you in the house; he told you he wanted to go for a walk, though you beg him like a worthless slut to stay with you. Then you beg him to kiss you, an' he turn you out. I was outside, under your man's office window, and I hear a lot. I follow you there. I was in the banana patch near here when you leave, but you didn't know that. I find out everything about you. You don't deny it now?'

'Deny it? Deny what? That I love him and he love me? Why should I deny it? Deny it to a miserable little beast like you? Ah-ha-ha! You fool!—don't you think I know that you know it a long time? And that I didn't care? But you lie! You lie when you say he drive me out of the house tonight. Poor fellow, he was sick; he wanted to go out for a walk; he didn't want any scandal 'rom you—as if you were worth a thought! So I left him tonight. But he kissed me as if he loved me, and I kiss him too, and will kiss him again and again. You been spying? Well, there is no cause for you to spy any more. You know

everything now, and I will tell you more. I despise you; I hate you. You have never been even able to give me a child. Not even that—God only knows what you are good for! But my lover, the Sahib, will give me a baby, for I want one; it will be mine and his, you understand? Mine and his. Now you can put that into your pipe and smoke it.’

‘You——’ he snarled, leaping up, ‘you say more than you know! But what I put into me pipe tonight will be hell for you!’ He laughed like a madman as he spoke; he drew a pipe out of the breast of his shirt and flung it into her face. Instantly she recognised the odour that had faintly pervaded the room not long before.

‘Ganga!’ she exclaimed.

‘Ganga, yes!’ And now the restraint, imposed upon his wild anger by an almost superhuman effort, was shattered, and the ganga smoker was in an instant a furious maniac. The drug he had been indulging in was a whip to his wrath, a stimulus to the terrible intention he had formed. He was maddened now, maddened with hate, jealousy, with the anguish of one betrayed and told of it to his face; maddened by the taunt that the baby his wife swore to bear would be another man’s, by the insult that he had never given her a child; maddened too by ganga, the terrible drug whose effect is too often to drive even peaceful men to the committing of dreadful crimes.

‘Ganga!’

Marie whispered the word. She was not a coward, and tonight she had been the victim of a despair to which death seemed preferable. She was prepared to fight and go down losing all, but even she shuddered on realising that at this moment she was dealing with a brain become lunatic, with one who was more a maniac than a normal man, with an Indian husband who had reverted to the savage instincts of this type. She threw her eyes rapidly about for some weapon of defence, saw none, then precipitated herself towards the door. But he was before her. With one leap he had placed

himself between her and the door, while from the nail on the wall where it hung he wrenched a huge machete with a gleaming razor-edge. The machete swung high, one piercing scream burst from her lips, a scream so awful that it was echoed in terror by George, the garage-boy of the Great House, who happened to be passing the cottage on his way back home from a visit to some friends. Then the great knife descended, and Marie's head was almost entirely severed from her body. A howl escaped from Ramsingh: another and another, as though a wolf were baying. The woman had died instantly, but the infuriated man hacked at her dead body as though he would reduce it to mincemeat. George, the young Negro, hearing these terrible sounds, fled in the direction of the Morley servants' quarters to summon help; presently half-a-dozen persons were rushing, in various stages of undress, towards the Ramsingh cottage. When they reached it, all was silence. Summoning their courage, they entered swiftly, to find what remained of a human being on the floor. The sight forced screams from the lips of the women in the little crowd; they knew who had done this thing. But where was Ramsingh? Where was the murderer? He must be found, the police must be informed, and the master.

The master; where was he?

The murderer had dashed away with his weapon, perhaps to find the master.

What would happen if on this night the two came face to face?

CHAPTER 18

THE house servants knew that the young Squire had left the Great House; he had called out to one of them, on passing by the servants' quarters, that he was going for a walk and might not be back for another hour. But where was he now?

One of the men in the terrified, hysterical group took charge: usually, at a time of crisis, there is someone to rise to a position of command when the need for decision and action is apparent.

This man suggested that one of the boys should take a car out of the garage and speed over to Port Antonio to fetch the police. The other car was to be sent off with George to Dr. Croseby. It was patent that Marie Ramsingh was dead, had died instantly, but these people felt that a doctor ought to be summoned. And Dr. Croseby was the official physician, as it were, of Morley.

Meantime, how to get in touch with Mr. Norris?

'We don't know where he is,' said one of the women; 'but Mr. Robinson must be in the bookkeeper house.'

They closed the door of the room in which the corpse of the murdered East Indian woman lay and hurried on to the bookkeeper's house. Three bookkeepers slept there and all three would be roused. But young Robinson, who was always treated somewhat as a friend by Arthur, was considered by the workers as the chief bookkeeper, though as a matter of fact he was not.

Awakened by the clamorous knocking at his bedroom door, young Robinson sprang awake, wondering what the devil had happened now, for something seemed always to be happening at Morley. He was quickly apprised, and went

white with horror. He dragged on his clothes, by which time his fellow-bookkeepers were also awake and hurriedly preparing to take a hand in what might have to be done. He went with the servants and his colleagues to Ram-singh's cottage, opened the door and glanced one second only at what lay upon the floor, then turned away sick to his very soul. There were two people waiting at the Great House, in the event of Arthur's returning shortly from his walk, to let him know what had happened and to put him on his guard. Then Robinson came to a swift determination. He would go himself in search of Mr. Norris.

The two other bookkeepers, young Jamaicans, instantly offered to do likewise. But it was agreed that only one of them and Robinson should go; each taking a different direction; the other would remain to meet Mr. Norris, if he should return before the searchers found him, or to meet the police and Dr. Croseby if they arrived first.

The bookkeepers were just about to set out on their respective undertakings when a man came running towards them; Mr. Norris had turned up safe and sound, he gasped, and was coming on now; he would be there in a few moments. They had not long to wait. Arthur came striding up—he had run a part of the way—and there was little need to tell him anything. He had learnt already: after all, the tragedy could be told in a dozen words.

He went into the cottage alone. He looked down upon what had been a beautiful girl who had loved him with such utter carelessness of consequences that her life had paid the forfeit, and he staggered as though he would fall. His fault! Those were the two words that rang in his brain—his fault. He had brought her to this, to her death; and now she lay there in a heap at his feet, hardly recognisable as a human being, though, by some strange chance her head had not been touched by the mad East Indian's weapon, and the open eyes were still staring as if in terror of a swift-impending doom.

'My fault,' he kept repeating to himself; 'I have killed poor Marie, or helped to do it. And that brute—'. He recalled the warning the servant had given him at the Great House. Ramsingh was at large with his machete. 'Ramsingh is searching for me,' he said to himself. 'He is looking for me.'

He felt as though iron bands were being drawn around his heart. There crept into his brain a feeling of numbness, as though acute sensation had achieved its utmost and the nerves of feeling and faculty of thinking were now being paralysed. Ramsingh was at large, looking for him; he would probably be prowling about, ready to spring out of some obscure corner or clump of trees, and strike. His life was in danger. Well, that was only right, and his mind was made up. He himself would hunt for the murderer and give him his chance of a fight. He would seize him, if possible, and hand him over to the police. The beast—the mean, sneaking, treacherous, murderous beast! He had waited to strike like this, to hack poor, pretty, loving, devoted Marie to pieces. Arthur's eyes filled with hot tears and he turned and strode into the open, with one idea in his mind. This was disgrace anyway; nothing could be hidden now; the worst, and much more than the worst that he had feared had come to pass. But at least he would not shrink from facing the wretch who had planned this horrible thing. They would meet this very night, and if it were Ramsingh and not he who should be killed in the struggle, he would rejoice. For Ramsingh, he was determined, should not escape.

So a man maddened by jealousy and drug, and a man rendered wild by a terrible tragedy and a sense of moral guilt, were out this night with a desperate purpose in their hearts. But while Ramsingh had gone alone, two of the Morley bookkeepers quietly followed Arthur Norris. For they knew more than he and Marie had ever guessed, and they suspected something of what was now seething in his mind.

For a quarter of an hour he walked very rapidly, inviting attention by his loud tread and his avoidance of gloomy paths through the bananas; at the end of that time his excitement began to abate and reasoning came to his aid. He recognised suddenly that to rush forth to fight an East Indian murderer was the action of a man without real strength of character and discipline. He must face his ordeal and his punishment differently. He was in charge of Morley. He must return to give orders to his people and to see that these orders were obeyed. The police would be there shortly, Marie would have to be buried, and here he was on a mad and hopeless chase, for he had not even the faintest notion of where Ramsingh might be, and might never find him. If Ramsingh were looking or lying in wait for him that night, the advantage was with Ramsingh: he would not run away from the East Indian, but it did not become him to be hunting him down wildly without even a clue to his whereabouts. He had set forth with the superficial belief that he wished to seize the man to hand him over to the police, but he knew deep down in his mind that his real desire had been to meet Ramsingh and kill him for what he had done. But thus he would add murder to murder; add murder to his other faults, and bring a double disgrace upon his uncle. He thought of Mr. Pemberton now for the first time since he had seen Marie's body. And for the first time for months he thought of the older man as one to whom he owed something.

He turned his steps towards the Great House. He had regained control of himself.

On reaching the Great House he found that the police had arrived, and Dr. Croseby. They were now at the Ramsingh cottage.

He went thither; three policemen and a corporal had come; these were about to scour the plantation and the countryside for the murderer. Dr. Croseby had seen the body and given orders as to what should be done with it.

People in the coolie village had been informed of the tragedy; they were coming on, some of the women keening a peculiar note, the men silent but frightened. Some carried lanterns, and these moved like tiny, steady flames amidst the darkness of the tropical shadows and trees. A sense of oppression was in the air, a terrifying suggestion of more horrors to follow. The people, Negro and East Indian alike, glanced apprehensively around them, hung close to one another, wished that daylight would come. Daylight might mean safety. But in these shadows fear dwelt, fear and the black spirit of murder.

The police corporal saluted Arthur. 'The man Ramsingh, sir,' he said briskly, 'is either hiding somewhere on the plantation now, or is gone somewhere else. He may be making for Kingston by this. He isn't near here, I am sure.'

Dr. Croseby spoke loudly and with distinctness: 'I have told the corporal, Arthur, that Ramsingh is a ganga smoker. I warned him myself of the risk he was running, and I found a pipe with ganga in the room here ten minutes ago. He was ganga-maddened; that is why he killed his wife.'

'These people,' the doctor continued, 'know what they have to do. We shall have to bury the body as quickly as possible, but I have instructed them to send for her father. We had better go up to the Great House now. There's nothing more we can do here.'

He took Arthur's arm with a faintly compelling gesture and urged him in the direction of the Great House. When they were out of earshot he said:

'I don't want you to mix up yourself in this more than you can possibly help, Arthur. It's a hell of a mess.'

'And I am in it to the neck, Doctor. I can't escape being identified with it. You see, you don't know—'

'I think I know nearly everything, my boy; but let us go in and get a drink. The strain has been awful.'

The Great House was blazing with light; the servants had determined that no avoidable chance of concealment

should be afforded to Ramsingh within the premises, though one of the policemen had already searched in the house and about it. The doctor and Arthur went into the dining-room, and the doctor poured out whisky for himself and Arthur, then drew a chair close to the one into which he had pushed the younger man.

'Look here, Arthur,' he said, 'I have suspected that you and Marie—well, you know; and it is quite true that I warned Ramsingh against indulging in ganga a couple of days ago. But he went on smoking: he was deliberately maddening himself. With most men of ordinary mental equilibrium, the effects of ganga, though ultimately disastrous, are rather cumulative than immediate; what I mean to say is that though any ganga-addict may do terrible things at any moment, the drug does not always drive them mad rapidly. But I am not so sure about Ramsingh. I doubt if he has ever been wholly sane. And now, what with this ganga and this murder—it may be that tonight he is a maniac who will remain so.'

'And how does that concern me, Doctor?'

'In every way. What he says will not matter, and will hardly be coherent. He will be arrested and dealt with as a criminal lunatic, which indeed is exactly what he is. He will go to the asylum: he was booked for there, I think, in any case. If all this happens, your name will not come into the affair, for your house people will say nothing about your relations with Marie—not to the police, anyhow. And the police themselves will never go out of their way unnecessarily to involve a man of your position in a scandal.'

Arthur nodded his head grimly. 'I see your point,' he said; 'but what if Ramsingh is not a raving lunatic when he is arrested, or put on his trial? What then?'

'Then we'll have to stand the racket, that's all! But why take the worst view of the situation now? I am more likely to be right than you.'

'Even so, Dr. Croseby, even if I keep quiet, and go about pretending that I know little or nothing about this horrible, horrible affair, even if I successfully play the part of a coward and act successfully the part of a liar, there will be many here to guess at the truth, and in any case there is Marie's death: how can I pretend to myself that I was not responsible for that?'

'And what course do you proposed to take if not the sensible one of keeping your mouth shut, Arthur, and going about your business quietly?'

Arthur did not answer. He had made up his mind to no plan.

'You see yourself,' continued the doctor, 'that what I advise is the only thing to do; remember, too, you ought to think of your uncle and his wife. And don't go blaming yourself too much about poor Marie's fate. I don't want to hurt your feelings, my son, but now is the time to tell you plainly that a girl like that would never have been satisfied for very long with a man like Ramsingh. There was bound to be trouble sooner or later. I guess the end would have been the same—the machete. I am sorry you are concerned in the business; but I fancy that Marie was doomed to be killed and that Ramsingh was fated to be her murderer: besides you did not give him *ganga*, which he was probably smoking, now and then, secretly, before you came on the scene. There are things, you know, which no human being can prevent. I am a believer in fate, Arthur; I have seen so many things happen that seemed to be inevitable. So don't you go now and take all the blame to yourself. And keep a stiff upper lip, and your mouth shut.'

Dr. Croseby, having ended his effort to prevent Arthur from blaming himself overmuch, and thereby being tempted into some folly or the other, took his leave. He said nothing of his intention to have a telegram sent to Mr. Pemberton to come over to Morley at once. As he drove away he wondered where was Ramsingh, and if the man had gone

permanently mad, as he believed probable, and sincerely wished should be the case.

But where was Ramsingh?

After rushing away from the fatal scene of the murder, he had been inflamed by a desire to add a second victim to his count, to meet the Sahib and deal with him as he had dealt with his wife. Not that he thought of Arthur as equally guilty. In Ramsingh's philosophy of conduct, the woman was always more to blame than the man; she had an obligation to keep herself from men, no matter what the temptation that came her way. If married, she was her husband's property, his honour was in her keeping; it was natural that men should desire her if she were desirable, but for her to yield was inexcusable, and the punishment for delinquency was death.

And he knew Marie. He had always felt that she had little love for him, he had feared that if a favourable opportunity should occur she would betray him. Hence his furious jealousy of even Sampson, who had only been polite to his wife; and if he had not at first been suspicious and jealous of Arthur, that was because of the awe in which he held him, and of his belief that he was too great and too high-placed to think of an East Indian girl.

Marie, therefore, was in his mind the far guiltier party, and she had suffered, but the ganga was still working in a brain whose equilibrium had now been overthrown, and if he met Arthur Norris he would attack and kill him, even though at that moment he remembered that Arthur had once saved his life.

He did not thank the Sahib for that now: if Mr. Norris had saved his life he had also taken his wife from him. And he, by killing Marie, had become a murderer. A murderer. He knew what that meant. In a little while the police would be after him; they would track him down; the outcry would be raised that he must be captured; there would be no place of refuge for him, nowhere he could lie safely hidden: his

own people would not save him. The hand of every man would be against him; every voice would cry out for his arrest; the most humane would proclaim that the wife-killer should not escape.

He was doomed. He had killed and he was doomed. Very well. He had known it would be so before he had struck. He realised it with an awful vividness now that the deed was done. He had made up his mind to the hanging; but if he was to be hanged for murder, why the murder of one woman only? Why not send the man also the way she had gone? Why not?

But where to find him? Where was he?

Ramsingh remembered that Mr. Norris had said he was going out for a walk. He had heard him say also, quite distinctly, that he might be out for some time. He had been listening very intently under the open window of Mr. Norris' office.

Was he yet back in the house? Should he, Ramsingh, turn about now, hurry up to the Great House, and do what was right for him to do, since he could hang only once? He paused in his flight, but hesitated. If Mr. Norris were back, the house might be closed. Could he enter it? And by now they might have discovered Marie's death: she had screamed, he remembered, screamed once, but so loudly, so frightfully, that the sound might have been heard: he could not be sure. Thus to go back now might be only to invite capture; and some instinct warned him against that: he did not wish to be caught. The impossibility of ultimate escape impinged itself on his mind, he could not doubt it. But the instinct of self-preservation was also at work. He did not wish to be taken.

Unconsciously, he sought the deepest glooms of the banana forest in which he was wandering; it was as though he would hide himself.

He lay down to rest. He was panting from exertion, and the anguish in his heart sent the blood pumping fiercely

through his veins. He was a murderer fleeing from justice; a man without hope. In the morning, when the light came, and all things stood revealed in the unpitiful glare of the sun, they would find him. They would hunt him down. They might be hunting even now. He must rise and flee again.

But this mood also changed: he raved. He would not flee. He would stand and face them, and fight; he came, after all, of fighting stock. He was a member of a warrior caste, his people had been warriors in India. He would fight. The Sahib himself he might not reach, but anyone else he should meet he would strike at, man, woman or child. He would die fighting. He screamed it aloud: he would die fighting. But no one heard his mad proclamation. All round about him were darkness and silence and the heavy heat of the humid banana fields.

He wandered on, circling sometimes, instinctively keeping away from the roads running through the banana plantation. His nerves were quivering, jumping; there was in him an incessant urge to action. The effect of the ganga was more terrible now than it had been even when he had slain Marie. And Ramsingh, as Dr. Croseby had said, had never been quite balanced mentally.

When exhausted by physical effort, he rested; then he rose and pushed on again, with no settled objective.

He noticed at last that it was growing lighter. The darkness was thinning, objects veiled before came into view with rapid distinctness now. He could see the skies above flushing into pearly blue. Day. And soon all Morley would be alive with people searching for him.

He was close to the edge of a banana farm; beyond that was an open space of land. He was near to the cattle pastures. The cattlemen must already be stirring; they were early risers. But here no human being yet was visible.

Not a human being, but within a stone enclosure very near, and easily discernible, stood a great bull moving its

head slowly from side to side as if sniffing the air. Then it opened its mouth and bellowed, as if in challenge to the world.

Ramsingh knew that sound, recognised the mighty beast. It had nearly killed him once. Mr. Norris had said that it was very valuable and had insisted upon all possible care being taken of it: he remembered that distinctly.

He drew nearer to the pen.

The Mysore saw him and snorted. But the wall was too high for the bull to jump; he could only look over the top of it and glare hate and defiance at his enemies. He saw a man, something in red, moving towards him. He went mad, as moving red invariably renders an untamed bull. For a few seconds the mad bull and the mad East Indian faced one another with a wall of stone between them.

Then, in a flash, Ramsingh was charging towards the bull with the machete which he had never let drop from his hand.

Here was a challenge to him, and the Mysore was of great value. At that moment too he recalled that in India the beast was sacred, was worshipped; and though he himself was not of the ancestral faith, but christianised, it gave his frenzied brain a stab of joy to know that he could hack to pieces a sort of god which had cost the white men, his masters, so much money.

He clambered to the top of the stone enclosure, and aimed a swift cutting stroke at the Mysore. He drew blood, though the animal was not severely wounded. The bull drew swiftly back, stung by the pain; Ramsingh, eager to inflict further injury, bent forward, lost his balance, tumbled head foremost into the pen, and five seconds after was hurtling through the air, to fall outside, his neck and backbone broken.

It was the cattlemen who found him lying there a little later, and they carried the body to the coolie village. He was a ganga-smoker, the police reported at headquarters

later that day, who, after having killed his wife in a fit of madness, had rushed off and had endeavoured to kill the Morley Mysore bull. The latter's wound would heal. But, it was clear, only a madman would have gone out of his way to attack a savage creature which could not possibly have harmed him had he not entered its pen.

A coroner's inquest subsequently substantiated the view of the police.

CHAPTER 19

WHY should you go away, Arthur? Your uncle doesn't want you to; he has begged you not to. And nobody is talking about you and that unfortunate affair. Stay here. Very few people know anything for certain; it is easy to live down a thing like that, when no one can say much about it. And it was not mainly your fault; that coolie girl——'

'She wasn't a coolie, Gladys; the coolies are the labourers; she was always of a better class. And she is dead, dead through my fault mainly: I am not going to exonerate myself.'

Arthur paused, as if thinking, then went on.

'Uncle Alfred has acted very decently. He hasn't blamed me, he has hardly said a word. And he doesn't want me to throw up the attorneyship of Morley. He has even told me, very plainly, that in his will he has given the property to me.'

'I think he did so when we got married,' said Gladys thoughtfully, 'and though he said he was going to change his will, I don't believe he ever did it.'

'When did he say that?'

'The evening after the day he and I and James Cuthbert came to see you at Morley and found Marie Ramsingh there. I was mad to think that she——I may as well tell you the whole truth, Arthur: I wanted your uncle to force you to give her up, and he tried but failed, and then I taunted him with your defiance of him, and he swore to disinherit you. But he didn't; I can see that now.'

'Why did you do that, Gladys?'

'It was mean, wasn't it? But it was natural, Arthur; you see, you had said so much to me; and then for you to go

and take up with a girl so much beneath you was maddening to me. I know what you will say: it was not a matter that concerned me personally. No. Strictly speaking, it did not. And I shouldn't even mention it to you now. I am married. I am married to your uncle. I made my choice deliberately; but that cannot prevent me from feeling—can it?—that that choice had much to do with how you acted afterwards; so if you blame yourself, I also must take part of the blame.'

'You have nothing to reproach yourself with,' he answered; 'I should have been strong enough to act differently; I am not going to seek to establish any connexion between your marriage and my relations with a young married woman.'

'But they are connected; somebody has said that we are all links in a chain; and events are strung together, and follow one another, don't they? We all know that.'

'And some of us cannot help it or hinder it.'

'But if that is true of some, mustn't it be true of all, Arthur? I know I am getting out of my depth, but I feel that if you are to blame, so am I; and if I really am not, then neither are you; but that means that there is nothing for which we can be blamed or praised in this world, and then—but I am getting beyond my depth. What I wanted to say to you was, don't go away. Your life isn't ruined, though it very nearly was. Your uncle cares very much for you, more than for anyone else——'

'Gladys!'

'I think so, really. And it is only natural. I don't think he knows it himself, but I have come to see it, especially in the last couple of weeks. I am his wife, yes; but you mean in some ways so much more to him. He should not have married me, and I should not have married him: I can say that to you, and to you only in all the world, and it is true.'

'But now, if you follow this impulse of yours and go away, Arthur, don't you see how it will be? I shall feel that I am the cause of it; and if anything happened to you abroad I

should blame myself for it. That would not be happiness for me, would it? Then your uncle would be unhappy also, and the situation would not be pleasant for me.'

'You are not happy now, Gladys?' he asked, breaking in upon her remarks.

'I ought to be. I have everything that I married for.'

He was gazing earnestly at her. How little marriage had changed her. Slim, of middle height, graceful, with her brilliant colouring, bright eyes, delicate, straight nose, and firm, rounded chin—how adorable she was. And how unhappy, according to her own confession.

From the roof of the porch on which they sat her eyes wandered out to the farspread green expanse of fruit that was a fortune; she saw the cattle browsing in the pastures, the river gleaming silver in the setting sun, the coconuts gracefully rising high into the air, all evidences of wealth. Nearer still the gardens and lawns of Mapleton gave evidence of luxury. She was a wealthy woman and now amongst the very first people in Jamaica.

She laughed in a tone of mockery. 'I have got on wonderfully well for a tailor's daughter.'

'A *what*?'

'A tailor's daughter. Let me tell you briefly the story of my life. Alfred already knows it, he learnt it in England.'

She sketched her youth rapidly. 'You see how I have risen in the colonies?' she said.

'Well, why not? You are a lady; what else matters? But what has this to do with you and me now?'

'Nothing. I merely feel in a mood for confession today. This is the first time I have seen you since that terrible affair, and I don't know when we shall see one another again. Perhaps soon, perhaps not; but at any rate I think we had better not meet often in the future, so I wanted you to know something more about me than you did, and some of the things I have done. I have sometimes, recently, wanted to tell you everything.'

He understood. Whatever he had done, and though she was now married, Gladys loved him. Whether she had loved him before her marriage he could not be sure: perhaps even she herself could not be sure; but she loved him now. And she was unhappy; deeply unhappy, under her usual pretence at gaiety. She was now facing stark realities. She had sold her birthright of happiness for broad plantations and position, and she had found the exchange unprofitable.

He thought. What if she had married him? She would have had enough for all ordinary purposes. But she had been ambitious; she had wanted everything material and spectacular that was possible to her; she had scouted love, and love was having its revenge upon her.

But would she have been satisfied if she had married him, knowing or thinking that she could have done better for herself in the world? Would love and what he actually was and possessed have been sufficient for her? She would always have feared that his uncle might leave him nothing, and that would have been a bitter thought. Perhaps it was really the realisation of the emptiness which was her life, in spite of all that had come to her, which now caused her to prize what she had lost. Perhaps, above all, it was this shadow of tragedy in his life that had drawn forth for him in her heart a wealth of deep affection, a truer love than she had ever known. After all, he once had not desired to risk recklessly his uncle's displeasure, with perhaps disinheritance. But both his soul and hers had been purged as if with fire, and both thought and felt far differently today from how they had felt and thought but a few months before.

He remembered a verse that he had read many years ago, though it had not seemed to him to have any particular significance. He repeated it to himself:

For deeper their voice grows, and noble their bearing,
Whose youth in the fires of anguish hath died.

Their youth was not yet dead, but they had passed

through fires of anguish, were still passing through them, and their mutual passion was white-hot but purified in consequence. She had just said that they must not meet often in the future. She was right; they must not. He owed that to her, to his uncle. But though apart, they would both know that they loved one another now as they had never loved before.

Along the winding road which led up to Mapleton Great House they saw a car approaching. 'That is probably Alfred,' said Gladys. 'You must tell him that you are not going to do anything so foolish as to go away. He has been very anxious about it.'

And when Mr. Pemberton came in, Gladys herself said to him that she thought she had persuaded Arthur that there was no reason why he should leave Jamaica, and Mr. Pemberton loudly protested that he simply would not hear of Arthur's doing anything of the sort. 'What would I do without you, boy?' he asked; and Arthur, surprised at this outburst, looked keenly at his uncle and saw with something of a shock that he had aged and grown thin and was by no means the man he had been a couple of weeks before. 'I will stay, sir, if you want me to,' he said, simply, but there was an ocean of feeling behind those simple words.

'I want you to stay, and I want you to marry presently,' said Mr. Pemberton. 'Then I shall be happy.'

Gladys's face paled a little as she heard this remark; but she told herself that it would be best for Arthur, if the whispered scandal was to be forgotten, that he should marry. He could not remain single for her sake: to expect, to hope that would be preposterous. At that moment she was in a mood which demanded and exalted the sacrifice of all personal inclinations and desires. Since she had given herself for material possessions, she said to herself that she must not even wish that Arthur should take her into any account. He must not sacrifice himself for her. She must bow her head to the punishment before her.

The little party broke up, to meet later on before dinner. Arthur had said nothing to his uncle's suggestion about marriage.

That suggestion had not been idly made. That same day, before setting out on his return journey from Kingston to Mapleton, Mr. Pemberton had met Mr. Beaversham at the Myrtle Bank Hotel, where Mr. Beaversham sometimes lunched. Beaversham had joined him, friendly and full of solicitude: could they not lunch together? That would be better than eating alone. Mr. Pemberton gladly consented.

'What is there in all these rumours I hear about poor Arthur, Alfred?' asked Mr. Beaversham, his foxy face oily with sympathy. 'Nothing serious, I hope?'

'What have you heard, Sam?' countered Mr. Pemberton cautiously.

'Oh, that he was making love to some young married woman down your way, and that the husband went mad over it and got killed. Nothing very clear; but I was sorry to hear it. I hoped it wasn't true. A man like you shouldn't have these worries; and then Arthur is such a fine young chap. But you, I know, wouldn't stand any nonsense even from him . . . But, of course, you can't believe all that you hear.'

'Arthur was a little taken with a girl at Morley, Sam,' said Mr. Pemberton deliberately; 'you know how it is with these young fellows; you and I were just the same.'

Mr. Beaversham hastened to admit that that was so. He would have admitted anything just then in his eagerness to learn something about Arthur's behaviour.

'But there wasn't much in it, nothing at all to make any sane man mad. But Ramsingh was mad years ago, and he was a confirmed ganga smoker. The Government,' added Mr. Pemberton, 'does not do half as much as it should to suppress ganga-smoking here.'

'No,' agreed Mr. Beaversham. 'It is a shame; but you are a member of the Government, Alfred.'

Mr. Pemberton had forgotten that circumstance at the moment. But he waived aside his share in the responsibility for Government slackness, hitherto entirely unperceived by him.

'The man went mad one night. My nephew wasn't even at home, and the wife was in her cottage with her husband, so no one can say that Arthur and the girl were together. A madman is not responsible for his actions, so we won't say anything against Ramsingh; but he killed this unfortunate young woman and then rushed away and tried to fight my Mysore bull. The bull killed him. I shouldn't like to fight a Mysore, Sam.'

Mr. Beaversham was perfectly certain that he would not even dream of trying.

'And that is all there is to it.'

'I am glad,' said Mr. Beaversham heartily. He didn't imagine he had heard the half of what there was to be told; but at least he had had authenticated the rumour that Arthur had been involved with a married woman who had been slain by her jealous husband. He perceived, however, that Mr. Pemberton was endeavouring to shield Arthur. How much of this sprang from affection and how much was dictated by family pride and policy?

'Then Arthur still remains with you?' he inquired casually.

'Remains with me? What else did you expect? What has he done that he should not remain with me as long as he wants to? He is my dead sister's only child. He is one of the best planting attorneys and managers in Jamaica; indeed I don't know any man twice his age that is his equal. I want him to relieve me of some more of my work if he will do it: and the lad is sound stuff, so he will do it.'

'I have always known that Arthur is all right,' agreed Mr. Beaversham.

'Yes, you don't need to worry about him. He will be well off, too, when I am gone; in fact, if he would only make up his mind to marry now and settle down, I wouldn't wait until

I died to give him Morley and a decent sum of money. I have enough, and the only two people I have to provide for are my wife and Arthur. They will share and share alike.'

Mr. Pemberton was in an expansive mood; he was glad to be able to talk to someone who knew Arthur and had been friendly to him. He wanted to draw out from other persons good opinions about his nephew.

As for Mr. Beaversham, the announcement which Mr. Pemberton had just made had set his usually agile mind to rapid thinking. Hazel liked Arthur, and though many young men paid court to Hazel there was none of them in a particularly rosy financial position. And the admiral or general, conceived of as a possibility long ago by Mrs. Beaversham, had now, in a manner of speaking, been quite definitely retired even before he had materialised. Arthur had once been thought of as a suitable husband for Hazel; but he had fallen, it had seemed, from his uncle's financial grace and been consigned to the outer darkness of a limited salary. Now, suddenly, heaven, in the form of his uncle, was smiling upon the young man once more, and Mr. Beaversham became immediately interested. He liked that remark of Mr. Pemberton's, about giving Morley and a sum of money to Arthur when the young man should marry. That sounded like good sense. As to the scandal about the unfortunate lad, why, who could believe anything save that he had been a victim of circumstances? At that instant Mr. Beaversham was filled with resentment against the dead Ramsingh. Contrariwise, he felt like entertaining a very kindly feeling towards the Mysore bull, but then, of course, he had never been within bellowing distance of that Indian importation.

On his part, Mr. Pemberton had also done some thinking. He had had good reason to dislike these Beavershams; but the past was past; they had been punished; and he had wished before the estrangement and his own marriage that Arthur should marry Hazel. Why not? She was young, pretty, stylish, and as nice a girl as Arthur was likely to get.

They had known one another for years and years. If Arthur could love her and she him, what better thing could happen than a match between them? The sooner the better too, for, though he did not care to admit it even to himself, Mr. Pemberton was worried to death as to what people were probably saying about the Morley tragedy. Arthur would have to stay and face it out and live it down; but that would be much easier with a beautiful wife in high social position, and backed by the means his uncle could provide.

'I once wished,' he said quietly, 'that Arthur and Hazel would make a match of it. But somehow they didn't.'

Great men achieve success by deciding instantly. Thus, as Mr. Beaversham well knew, were some of Napoleon's notable victories won. He did not hesitate. No sooner were the words out of Mr. Pemberton's mouth than he responded.

'That was also my wish, Alfred; but after your marriage we kind of drifted apart, and then Arthur ceased to visit at Cripton: I don't know why.'

He paused to give Mr. Pemberton a chance to say something. No comment occurring to the gentleman just then, Mr. Beaversham continued.

'But if you think that way, and I tell you I think so too, it is only right that we should give Arthur an opportunity of meeting Hazel often. She has a lot of young fellows fooling around her, of course, but there is no one I would prefer to Arthur. A nice, straightforward chap.' He would have added 'moral', but thought it just as well, in the circumstances, to refrain from painting the lily. That Ramsingh incident, whatever the truth of it, had not yet been forgotten.

The two gentlemen understood one another well; they parted as the best of friends. The old relations between them had been resumed; but neither could guess what Gladys would do about it.

That afternoon Mr. Beaversham informed his wife of the conversation. Arthur would be very well off in spite of everything, and of course, before any wedding, there would be a

definite marriage settlement. Mr. Pemberton would, in the American slang, have to 'come across' before any ring was placed upon Hazel's finger. Mr. Beaversham would see to it that business principles were introduced betimes into this matter of marrying and giving in marriage.

Mrs. Beaversham was pleased, Mrs. Beaversham was satisfied that there was really in this world a stream of tendency making for righteousness. But she had insight into character, and she said to her husband:

'Alfred's wife isn't going to like this. Arthur was in love with her, or nearly so, before she married Alfred; and perhaps she was in love with Arthur too. I shouldn't be at all surprised at that. And she still hates us. If she can put a spoke in Hazel's wheel, you can look out for it.'

'What a wretched woman!' exclaimed Mr. Beaversham, scandalised.

'She is. But if Arthur falls in love with Hazel, she won't matter. Everything depends on Arthur. Nevertheless we shall have to watch Mrs. Gladys.'

CHAPTER 20

SO THAT was how it was! Gladys read again the gossip letter from her friend Dr. Mayland, or, rather, one part of it. 'Arthur has been up to Kingston three times these last two weeks,' wrote Miss Mayland; 'at least, I have seen him three times. I saw him once at Myrtle Mank and twice at Bournemouth on Saturday nights. He seems to be rushing her.' And so on, about other trivial matters.

Gladys understood. Mr. Pemberton was anxious that his nephew should marry, and Arthur, shaken by what had occurred, and touched by his uncle's continued kindness, was apparently falling in with the old man's wishes. And Mr. Pemberton's choice, of course, was Hazel Beaver-sham.

The Beavershams, whom Gladys hated, and whom her husband himself had once detested on her account, he was now willing to become friendly with again! And he was keeping from her the part he played in bringing Arthur and the girl together.

She had once thought that by marrying wealth and position she would achieve happiness. Her husband too had expected, she supposed, an orgy of passionate enjoyment; her youth, her beauty, her fascination had drawn him out of himself: he had imagined wonders with her as his wife, and at first he had tasted of those wonders. At first, too, she had been exalted by great possessions and by a position of which she may once have dreamed without daring to believe that the dream would come true. But now she was entirely disillusioned, and it seemed as though Alfred himself were suffering from disappointment.

Both had put the cup of joy to their lips. Somehow it had slipped away.

Well, there were some things that could not be helped. But one thing at least she would fight against.

That day she sent a letter to Dr. Mayland, and by the next post came a reply warmly inviting her to come and spend a few days with her friend.

She mentioned this invitation to Mr. Pemberton, but said she couldn't very well accept it now; on the other hand she wanted to go up to Kingston to make some purchases and she would stop with Jane overnight. The following day she went.

It was a Saturday. That night there was the usual Saturday dance at Bournemouth Bath. She attended it with Jane Mayland, and, as she had expected, she saw Arthur there. He was with Hazel Beaversham. When first she caught sight of them they were slowly walking down the long steps leading from the dance-hall to the garden. She and Dr. Mayland had come out upon the southern veranda of the hall just in time to see them disappearing; they had been dancing and now were going for a stroll about the garden and along the edge of the gleaming sands against which a scarcely moving sea lapped gently. Gladys glanced about her. The setting was a lovely one for lovers, a setting suggestive of romance, filling the soul with vague longings for the expression of devotion and love. She thought bitterly that it was Hazel who had brought Arthur to this place, Hazel who had made up her mind to have him, and who knew instinctively how the sense of towering, dark mountains to north and east, and shimmering sea bathed in moonlight, and music, and the happy laughter of youth, would move a man who had but recently passed through a terrible experience and would wish to find comfort and solace and forgetfulness somewhere.

The scene was exceedingly beautiful, but Gladys hated it. For it worked for the purposes of a girl whom she hated,

a girl who had determined to win the one man that she, Gladys Pemberton, had ever loved'

Yes; she no longer sought to avoid admitting to herself boldly that she loved Arthur; she, indeed, had shown him so. And though she herself had also said to him that they must not meet often, and had known that he would probably marry some day, she had not thought of his marrying so soon, and Hazel Beaversham of all the women in the world. That was what made this affair so miserable. It was not only that Arthur would be lost forever—as a wife she ought not even to think of him. But for him to marry Hazel would be a terrible humiliation. How could her husband countenance such a thing? And, if she could prevent it, ought she not to do it?

The great sheet of water, scarcely moving, stretched away to east and west and south; to the east and north towered the great mountains, and the tropical moon lighted up the scene with a brightness almost like that of day. In the swimming pool which one overlooked from the western veranda of the dance-hall, scores of people swam, dived, contorted themselves, laughed and chaffed each other, and the sound of their merriment filled the air. The orchestra struck up a lively tune, couples came hurrying back into the hall; presently a hundred or more persons were jazzing it on the polished floor, Arthur and Hazel among them. Gladys made up her mind.

She could trust Jane Mayland. 'I should like to speak to Arthur for a few minutes,' she said, 'but, if I can avoid it, I don't want to meet Hazel Beaversham. Now, what can I do?'

'Leave that to me,' said Miss Mayland. 'I'll go and talk to Hazel, and if you stand where Arthur can see you he'll come over to you, sure. Wait till this dance is over.'

The dance over, Miss Mayland stepped across the floor briskly and greeted Hazel. 'I brought Gladys Pemberton with me for a chaperone,' she said gaily, and waved an arm indicating the spot where Gladys stood. She plunged

into a conversation with Hazel, while they moved off towards some seats on the eastern veranda. Both Hazel and Arthur had followed the motion of her arm and had noticed Gladys sitting by herself. When the chairs had been found for the two ladies, Arthur said he would go over and speak to Gladys. He would not be long away.

'Well, who would have thought of seeing you here, Gladys!' he exclaimed as they shook hands. 'The last person in the world.'

'Shall we go for a walk?' she suggested.

'Yes, come.' He reflected that Hazel was with someone, and therefore he needn't hurry.

'You are surprised to see me?' she asked, when they were in the garden and no one near enough to overhear them.

'Well, rather.'

'And sorry?'

'Why should I be sorry, Gladys? How can you say such a thing?'

'Well, there's Hazel, you know . . . Do you know what people are saying, Arthur?'

'What?'

'That you are rushing Hazel Beaversham. That you are going to marry her. It's none of my business, of course; but you and I have been . . . have been such good friends, that I thought I might mention it. Am I to congratulate you?' She ended her question with a laugh which he could not misunderstand.

'You still dislike Hazel, I see,' he replied.

'And you love her; is that it?'

'You know I don't, Gladys.'

'But you feel that you must marry, because your uncle wishes it, and it is the safest and best thing for you. You once played for safety, and I too, Arthur, and we both regretted it.—Oh yes, I am speaking plainly: it is just as well.—Do you think that playing for safety again will help you?'

'Do you still care?'

'You know I do; even if it is wrong, I do. Don't marry Hazel Beaversham, Arthur; even if Alfred implores you to. You will never be happy with her, And, besides, they treated me like a dog when they could and you promised me never to forgive them for it. Is this the way you keep your promise?'

They had paused in their walk. Her voice was vibrant with feeling. He was moved to the depths.

The sea, silvered by the moonlight, rolled away to the dark line of the Palisadoes. There seemed to be in the languid air, in the misty mountains looming northward, a suggestion of melancholy, almost of sorrow, and in the hearts of these two there was sadness; the beauty of the night appeared to them informed with sadness. It was as though all joy had vanished from their lives.

He looked into her eyes. 'Would you throw up everything and go away with me, Gladys?' he asked suddenly.

'Yes,' she replied without a moment's hesitation, and though he had asked the question he was surprised and startled at her answer.

'Because you don't want me to marry Hazel?'

'Her or any other woman. And because I love you and am sick to death of my dreadful life.'

The restraint and calculation of long years were at this instant as if they had never been. She who had thought and planned for worldly advancement caught herself offering to throw all she had gained aside, and even her name; and she was astonished at herself, astonished by what she had said, and yet felt no desire to unsay it. She would burn her boats if he wanted her to do so. To gain and keep him she would make whatever sacrifice the effort demanded.

'And I,' he said to her slowly, 'would give up everything for you too; though I might have hesitated about it once. But, darling, I have nothing to lose, and you have everything. And then there is my uncle. He has treated us both wonderfully'—she smiled bitterly at this, thinking that her

share in this treatment had not been so wonderful—‘and for me to go away with you now, after all that has so recently happened—well, I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t do it, Gladys.’

‘Then it will be Hazel?’

‘No. It will be nobody. Surely, dear, I can remain as I am, loving you, caring only for you, seeing you sometimes, thinking of you always. The desire of the moth for the star, maybe, but henceforth a desire only for the star.’

‘You are poetic, dear,’ she said, ‘but I suppose you are right. Yet I am afraid, Arthur. I know it is all wrong, and there are many who would call me a bad, wicked, designing woman, because I say I love you and don’t want you to go to any other woman, but I can’t help it. I can depend on you, can’t I?’ He told her ‘Yes.’

They resumed their walk in silence. After a couple of minutes—

‘Let us go back now,’ she said, and they returned to the dance-hall.

He found her a seat then went to look for Hazel and Dr. Mayland. The latter bade them both good-night and rejoined Gladys; Hazel glanced inquiringly at Arthur and remarked:

‘You left us rather long, Arthur.’

‘I haven’t seen Gladys for quite a time. We had a lot to say to one another.’

‘Evidently. I suppose she dislikes me as much as ever?’

‘Do you like her, Hazel?’

‘A question for a question, eh? But since you won’t answer, let us talk about that picnic at Morley I suggested. I want to bring some of my friends over. Can’t it be arranged?’

‘Yes,’ he answered, but without enthusiasm, and for the rest of the evening he was preoccupied. Naturally, Hazel noticed this; noticed also that he did not revert to the picnic suggestion. So this was Gladys Pemberton’s doing; this, perhaps, was what had brought Gladys over to Kingston and

to Bournemouth. Gladys Pemberton was deliberately putting a spoke in her wheel, had determined to separate Arthur from her. And she had become so sure of him! She had thought that tonight he would propose, he had been so attentive, so nice, before Gladys's appearance. Hazel was furious. To lose so much just when possession seemed so certain was maddening. It was Gladys who had dashed the cup of success from her lips. And, at the moment, she did not see what could be done about it.

The next day she spoke to her mother. Mrs. Beaversham in turn mentioned what had occurred to her husband. Mr. Beaversham was a man of resource, of projects and of schemes; it was not easy to divert him from any end to which he had set himself. He guessed that Mr. Pemberton, if sufficiently prompted, would bring avuncular pressure to bear on Arthur, and that Arthur, if only through gratitude to the old man, would not obstinately rebel against him now. And Mr. Pemberton was eager for a match between Hazel and Arthur. Gladys, concluded Mr. Beaversham, would not dare to go too far in her opposition, and so long as Arthur did not openly break with Hazel, did not keep away from her, all might yet be well. A little manœuvring, a little managing might be required, but if persistency were shown by the family, Arthur would have to yield in the end. So Mr. Beaversham wrote to Arthur formally inviting him to two functions, the shrewd calculation being that if he refused one he would have to accept the other unless he intended to be openly rude. It fell out as Mr. Beaversham planned, and Gladys heard that Arthur had again been seen with Hazel. Was he weakly allowing himself to be caught in their trap? she asked herself in alarm. She knew he did not want to be, but the Beavershams might be too much for him. Hazel alone was formidable; her youth and her beauty, and Arthur's loneliness, fought for her. Gladys no longer sought to deceive herself; she intended to surrender nothing where Arthur was concerned. She would fight for him with Hazel

or any other woman; if he could not be hers, at least he should belong to no one else. The coolie girl—well, at most she was but a thing of the moment; but Arthur married would be Arthur entirely lost. She would not have it so! She had struggled much in her life; she had succeeded again and again. Then why not now, when she was striving for what she valued most in life—the undivided devotion of this man?

She made her arrangements; she too would be more often in Kingston than formerly, whether her husband liked it or not. She could always stay with Dr. Mayland.

Mr. Pemberton wondered what on earth she should wish to go to Kingston twice in one week for, especially alone. He saw no reason why he should accompany her; in fact she displayed no desire that he should; and after her fifth visit to the capital he began to complain. But she was no longer the prudent young wife with an earnest desire to avoid differences and friction. Mr. Pemberton could not but see that she had suddenly and radically changed.

As for Arthur, he did not visit the Beavershams as frequently as before, but he could not suddenly refrain from going to see them sometimes. That, he told himself, would have been caddish conduct. But he fought against any desire to visit Mapleton; he felt it was only common decency that he should not seek to see Gladys; he must not betray his uncle's confidence; not add such treachery to his other faults. But he heard now and then, from mutual friends, of Gladys's trips to Kingston, of her dropping in at the Myrtle Bank Hotel, at the Liguanea Club, at Bournemouth and other places with Jane Mayland; and on two occasions she had been escorted by James Cuthbert. His uncle had been over to Morley three or four times lately; he had mentioned that Gladys was more reluctant than ever to remain for long at Mapleton and that he himself could not tolerate the idea of gadding about Kingston in the evenings. So, evidently, Gladys had had to fall back upon Jim for a male escort and dancing partner. Arthur wondered if Mr. Pemberton quite

liked that. But he did not mention the matter to his uncle, and so he never learnt that that gentleman did not know that James Cuthbert was the unconscious ally of Gladys in the campaign of watchful waiting she was conducting against the Beavershams, a campaign of vigilance which, she felt, required one to be frequently on the spot, if one were to defeat the machinations of such wily and plotting people as the Beavershams.

Nor did Arthur guess why Gladys now went to Kingston so often. He thought it was mainly for diversion, and sympathised with her. But he was beginning to feel some sympathy for his uncle also. On the last occasion he had come over to Morley, Mr. Pemberton had announced his intention of staying for the night; Gladys had gone to Kingston to stay with Miss Mayland, he said, so he thought he would impose on Arthur for dinner and a bed. Arthur was touched. This was an old man who was talking in this wise, not the dominant and debonair Alfred Pemberton of but a few months before. This was a weary and disillusioned man. He was no longer happy in his marriage—Arthur knew that. And the tragedy at Morley had shaken him. Arthur realised now that his uncle's affection for him was deeper than he had imagined.

And yet that uncle had not hesitated to take from him the girl he loved.

What a mess it all was! Not one of the three of them was happy or even quietly contented. Not one of them but had acted like a fool.

And now his uncle was leaning on him; clinging as it were to him.

'I will come over to Morley whenever Gladys goes up to Kingston alone,' the old man had said on leaving one morning, after having slept the night, for the first time in years, at Morley. 'Being here reminds me of the days when you were a boy, Arthur, and we lived together.'

Yes; Arthur very much pitied his uncle, even while he passionately sympathised with and loved his uncle's wife.

CHAPTER 21

MR. BEAVERSHAM hurried into the tavern, which was also a lodging house, glad to escape from the storm of wind and rain in which he had been driving for some time. He was on his way to Kingston after one of his periodical business visits to the country. An excellent man of business, he did not merely send his agents to investigate his country affairs; he often went himself. And now and then, when he came by way of Buff Bay and Hardware Gap, he would stop for an hour or two at this little hostel.

The rain was terrible and the wind was blowing with the strength of a gale. It was perilous to travel over roads that skirted precipices. He must remain here for the night, making Kingston as early as might be tomorrow morning. Unfortunately, the tavern-keeper informed him, all the four rooms in the tavern were already taken up, and even in the sitting-room, in a corner of which stood a bar, there were some eight men, black and brown, who were prepared to pass the night in chairs, drinking to prevent their spirits from suffering depression.

Mr. Beaversham was dismayed. He could not sit with such people, and there was no bed available. But the host suggested placing a canvas easy chair in a passage leading off from the sitting-room, dining-room, and bar—the big common hall, in a word—to a wing of the old stone building in which were the living quarters of the proprietor's family. This passage was narrow and dark, but at least a chair there was better than occupying a seat amongst a number of objectionable people who might soon be fuddling themselves with liquor.

Mr. Beaversham took Hobson's choice, his chauffeur would

be provided for downstairs. When the easy-chair was placed and he had swallowed a stiff whisky-and-soda, he settled himself down for a miserable night. That, however, he philosophically reflected, would be better than breaking his neck down a precipice.

He faced the lighted hall with its somewhat noisy occupants. Opening upon this hall, on the opposite side, were two rooms, the door of the one to the right being distinctly visible to him as he half-sat, half-reclined in the long canvas chair which, he mournfully thought, might be infected with bedbugs. This belief induced uneasy sensations all over his body; and that and the men's chatter and laughter prevented him even from dozing. He cursed the storm with all his heart. He could not imagine a more wretched and unprofitable prospect.

And then the door on the farther side was opened and he found his eyes staring into the interior thus revealed with incredulous surprise.

A man came out of the room and approached the tavern-keeper, after closing the door behind him. The man went back, Mr. Beaversham eagerly following his movements, his eyes concentrated so as to miss nothing of the scene in the lighted chamber in front of him. There could be no doubt about it! The man was James Cuthbert. And the woman in the room, seated in an arm-chair by the iron bed, was Gladys Pemberton.

Mr. Samuel Beaversham, like his dear wife Arabella, took what he called a practical and commonsense view of human beings and their actions, which was usually a view not complimentary to his fellow-creatures. He had heard from Mrs. Beaversham that Gladys was now in the habit of coming up to Kingston far oftener than she used to do. The Beavershams' conclusion had been that these visits were undertaken for the purpose of **keeping** an eye on Arthur and Hazel, though Arthur came to Kingston more rarely now and never acted as a prospective lover might well be

expected to do. That Gladys Pemberton was conducting an active campaign against Hazel, then, the Beavershams already knew; apparently, too, it was becoming a successful campaign. Mrs. Beaversham considered that Gladys's actions were scandalous and animated by the most unseemly jealousy and hate; unhappily, nothing could be said or done about it, for one could hardly bring any accusation against a lady because she came rather frequently to Kingston and St. Andrew. Now, however, it seemed to Mr. Beaversham, there was another and far more questionable reason for Gladys's numerous descents upon the capital; she was evidently a polyandrist in intention if not in act, and, if his eyes could be trusted, she was carrying on a clandestine affair with James Cuthbert if not with Arthur Norris. Who could possibly have believed such a thing! Yet there was the evidence of it—herself and James in a room in an out-of-the-way tavern where they would not expect to meet a single person of their acquaintance.

Mr. Beaversham knew that, whether going to Kingston or returning to Mapleton, this route was never taken by people who lived at Mapleton or in its neighbourhood. It was longer than the way over Junction Road, it was steeper, it simply was not the road to and from Kingston to Mapleton. Clearly, then, if a young couple took it, that must be for very personal reasons, and when such a couple travelled that road on a stormy night, and shut themselves together in a bedroom, what was one to think of their intentions? So this was the sort of young woman Mrs. Alfred Pemberton was! Mr. Beaversham virtuously informed himself that he was shocked by what had been revealed by those two glimpses he had had into the interior of the opposite room.

In business the great thing to know is how to make use of an opportunity or of a fact that comes your way unexpectedly. Mr. Beaversham forgot the possibility of bed-bugs in his chair and regarded benevolently the presence of those men in the hall, in spite of their noisiness. But for them

he would not have been put in a dark passage where he could not possibly be recognised by anyone standing outside of it. It was fate or good fortune that had caused him to arrive late at this tavern tonight, and that had so arranged the chain of events in the universe that he should sit facing the room in which Gladys Pemberton and James Cuthbert were concealed. He now prayed that morning should come quickly and the storm abate. He would be off to Kingston early, there to set in motion, with great discretion, news that should come to Mr. Pemberton's ears. But first he had a work to do in this tavern. He must make sure that the tavern-keeper had seen Mrs. Pemberton and James distinctly, so that, if the rumour to be put about were ever questioned, this man would come forward if necessary and testify to everything in the interests of virtue and the sanctity of the marriage vow.

He rose quietly and went into the smoking-room, which was lighted by kerosene lamps, and on the walls of which hung dingy pictures, oleographs in faded frames of gilt. He beckoned to the host, who followed him into the passage to which he returned, for fear Cuthbert might make another sudden appearance.

'What about the room opposite?' he asked. 'Couldn't I get it?'

'No, sir, a gentleman and a lady come a little while before you an' take it. I thought I did tell you that already.'

'What a pity! Man and his wife?' he went on conversationally.

'Yes, sir; I suppose so,' said the man dubiously. He had not inquired. And, of course, at a place like his, no one thought of keeping a register.

'You don't know them, then?'

'No, sir.'

'I wonder if it's anybody I know; friends, I mean. Did you see them clearly? Are they middle-aged people?'

'No, sir; quite young. The lady is very pretty and nice an'

polite. She say the storm catch her on the road and that's why they come here. An' the gentleman is very curtcheous too.'

'Oh, well, I suppose I don't know them. Thank you. I'm afraid I'll have to sit in this chair all night. But I'll be going at daybreak. I want to leave before anybody else does; can you arrange to get me a cup of tea very early?'

The tavern-keeper promised to see to this, and, the storm having blown itself out before three in the morning, Mr. Beaversham was on his way to Kingston by half-past four.

Then a whisper was heard in the land. The tale was passed from lip to lip; something was suggested; yet few persons dared to say openly that Gladys Pemberton and James Cuthbert had passed a whole night together in a common tavern bedroom on a road where they had clearly no right to be. In a week all society was acquainted with the outlines of the story at least. This was highly delicious scandal. A tit-bit of the best. There were some who laughed at it as libel; others who gladly believed it; still others who said that everything was possible, that Gladys had always seemed to like Jim Cuthbert, that, after all, she was young, and that, above all, what she did was none of their business. No one proposed that she should be cut or dropped. It was her husband's affair. The outsider, strictly speaking, knew nothing. And then she gave such delightful parties at Delva, and entertained so well at Mapleton.

And while the talk was at its height it occurred to Mr. Beaversham that his duty as a friend compelled him to bring it to Mr. Pemberton's knowledge, since no one else seemed inclined to do so.

It was a daring step he was about to take. Pemberton might insult him like a dog, and once and for ever sever all relationship with him. But on the other hand there was a well-deserved blow to be struck at Gladys in punishment for her former insolences; then, too, Arthur was still being estranged from Hazel, and unless Gladys's influence was

definitely shattered this estrangement would continue. Something had to be done, and here stood the means, ready to hand. On the whole there was much to be gained by dealing the blow, and the chance of its miscarrying must be taken. If Mr. Pemberton became insulting and even threatening, Mr. Beaversham could retire with wounded dignity. And, if Pemberton decided to take legal action against anyone spreading this rumour about his wife—well, there was enough evidence to force him to leave outsiders alone and concentrate his wrath upon his wife.

Mr. Beaversham, finding that he had business to transact in St. Mary—he had not thought of such business before—went down to that parish and communicated by telephone with Mr. Pemberton. He informed the latter that he was in the town of Annotto Bay. No, he would not come up to the Great House; he didn't have the time. But he would be in the town for a little while. Mr. Pemberton would meet him down there. He would be delighted. And so at Mr. Pemberton's town office he waited, and presently his old friend dropped in.

The two men talked about this and that, Mr. Beaversham explaining that he was on his way to Port Antonio, but would not find time to call on Arthur on the journey. Then he assumed a troubled expression—and indeed he did feel troubled—and opened the subject to which his manœuvres naturally led.

'If I might take the liberty of an old friend, Alfred, I should like to ask if you have heard any of these rumours about James Cuthbert.'

'Cuthbert? No. What is it?' inquired Mr. Pemberton.

'Well, I really don't like to say. It doesn't concern me, and all that a friend gets if he repeats what he has heard is abuse as a rule. Perhaps I had better say nothing. I don't want to be misunderstood.'

'What the devil are you driving at, Sam?' asked Mr. Pemberton testily (he was developing a touchy temper these

days): 'Cuthbert is no particular friend of mine, so you needn't imagine that I am going to be angry at anything you say about him. Go ahead.'

'Well, you see, Alfred, I am in rather a delicate position. I am your friend; but even a friend has to be careful in these matters. Only, I am indignant when I hear people attributing wrong motives to what is undoubtedly an innocent action, and I think these chattering mouths should be stopped. You should threaten one or two of them: that would fix them.'

'And what the devil am I to threaten them about?'

'Well, as you know, Jim and your wife stopped at Brook's Tavern the night of the big rain storm. They were there together all night, as you know, and that has got about and people are talking of it in Kingston and St. Andrew. There's nothing in it, as you and I know—What's the matter?'

'You said that my wife and James Cuthbert stopped at Brook's Tavern one night?'

'Why, yes; I saw them myself. But there was nothing in that, surely. Of course they had a room; they had to have; but you know about it as well as I, don't you?'

Mr. Pemberton rallied his wits with a magnificent effort. A minute ago everything about him was shaking as though rocked by an earthquake; now he had mastered his emotions, and, though his face had gone deathly pale, he was quite calm outwardly save for the trembling of his hands. He looked Mr. Beaversham squarely in the eyes.

'Yes, I know all about it,' he said; 'and I wonder why you are telling me about it now.'

'Because of the stupid rumours that are going around. It is a shame,' continued Mr. Beaversham with great indignation, 'how the names of the best people in this country are bandied about by—'

'You?' asked Mr. Pemberton.

'Alfred, how could you say such a thing?'

'You say you saw Cuthbert and my wife at the tavern,

where any two people might stop through an accident to their car or any other circumstance. You were there, but you didn't mention anybody else of any importance who was. Yet you tell me that people in Kingston and St. Andrew, who have never even heard of Brook's Tavern, are talking about Cuthbert and my wife. Who could have told them if you didn't?

'Do you think I could have done such a thing, Alfred?'

Mr. Pemberton's self-restraint snapped. 'Think?' he cried, 'think? I don't think, I know it is just the sort of thing that a low-down, dirty rat like you would do! A spy and a sneak and a crook like you would like nothing better. And don't you suppose I know your reason? Only a week ago Arthur told me that he would not marry your daughter, even to oblige me, and I suppose you yourself have seen that he would not. You wanted Arthur and my money, you saw you were going to get neither, therefore you went around spreading a dirty little rumour about my wife. You miserable caricature of a man—if I did not want to avoid anything like a scandal I would kick you out of my office! But to touch you would be murder, you thing of skin and bone! Now let me warn you. I know that Jim Cuthbert and my wife were at the tavern that night; naturally I would know. And if I hear anything more about it, in any impudent or suggestive sort of way, I will make you smart for it. Now clear out!'

Looking at his white, tense face, Mr. Beaversham thought it wisest to attempt no remonstrances or explanations, but to clear out quickly, and sideways, lest Mr. Pemberton should forget his desire to avoid a scandal and be tempted to bestow a kick. He went rapidly down the rickety stairs and to his car, and disappeared swiftly out of the town. His soul was filled with bitterness. But a little time ago he had been so certain that Arthur would become his son-in-law; indeed, Mr. Pemberton had set himself out to engineer the match. Now the last vestige of hope had vanished; he had played his last desperate card and had gained his former friend's

hatred in consequence. Fortunately, he had not been kicked. Mr. Beaversham was a bit of a philosopher in his own way; he was always looking for compensations. He began to look for them now. He had done his best, and it was something to have escaped without bodily harm. He had lost Arthur, but Hazel was young, would have some money, and there were plenty of other young men in the world. Yet it was all a pity, for he had felt so sure, after that conversation at the Myrtle Bank Hotel with Mr. Pemberton, that Arthur would be glad to get Hazel and so live down that nasty affair with the coolie woman. 'But it is never wise to be too certain,' he thought to himself as he took the road to Kingston. You can never know what is going to happen.

CHAPTER 22

MR. PEMBERTON heard the footsteps of Mr. Beaver-sham as that gentleman hurried down the stairway, heard also the sound of his car as he started off on his return journey to Kingston; heard these things in a dazed sort of way, for suddenly a reaction had set in and he felt weak and limp, with the blood surging to his head and his limbs trembling.

Gladys and James Cuthbert together at night in some miserable tavern of which he had never heard before, and this being talked about among the people who knew them! When had this thing happened? How had it come about?

So his suspicions of Cuthbert and his wife had been right! So they were lovers, clandestine lovers, and they had stooped to frequenting low, common haunts to carry on their intrigues! This was what his marriage had brought him—disgrace! This was the climax of a life in which he seemed to have won everything worth having! People were laughing at him. He was the target of lewd and loathsome remarks.

Again he exerted his will, rose, and went down to his car. His chauffeur noticed his ashen complexion, his trembling hands, and asked if anything were wrong with him. He shook his head negatively and said the one word 'Home!'

Gladys coming forward to meet him was also startled by his appearance. He refused her assistance, though it seemed that he walked with difficulty.

'Please come into the library with me,' he said, 'I want to say something to you.'

In the library (which contained no books, or hardly any to speak of), Mr. Pemberton seated himself and began at once:

'When did you spend a night with Cuthbert at Brook's Tavern, and why did you tell me nothing about it?'

'I see,' murmured Gladys, understanding in a flash his agitation and attitude. 'It was on Thursday night last, and I said nothing because you were at Morley when I arrived back here in the morning with Jim, and you are so dreadfully jealous that, as you did not see us together, I thought it was wisest not to offer any explanations. I did not want you to know.'

'Other people know. They are talking about it in Kingston and St. Andrew, and they will soon be talking about it all over the island. You spend a whole night in a low place and you keep it secret—as you thought. Why did you have to go there? Only one thing could have taken you there—'

'Alfred, please cease to insult me; I will not put up with it. Perhaps I ought to have told you, but it is difficult to talk to you about anything, you are so afraid of what other people might say or think. This is the whole story. I went over to Kingston last Thursday morning, but I was not sure whether I would stay over the night or not, and I said so. It rained all the way to Kingston, and the Junction Road was becoming dangerous through landslides: we could just get over it. When I decided to return that same day, in the evening, it was certain that the Junction Road would be blocked—you yourself know how it is when it rains there for days. But Jane had an engagement that night and I did not want to inconvenience her or any of my other friends, nor did I care to go to a hotel. I knew I could come back to Mapleton by way of Newcastle, Hardware Gap and Buff Bay; everybody knows that; but I had never been that way before and our chauffeur did not know the road: he has never been over it. It was when I was talking over the situation with Jane that she suggested that if I really wished to go back that evening, I might ring up Jim Cuthbert and ask him to take me home. She knew that Jim is always ready to oblige his friends.'

'Jane Mayland's suggestion and not yours, eh?'

'Yes; you can ask her. I rang up Jim and he said he would bring me over and return to Kingston that night: he had made the journey many times and knew the way. I left our boy to bring back the car the following day, and we started out from Kingston about six o'clock, expecting to be here in a couple of hours' time. But the rain grew worse and a gale sprang up—you know about that, for it blew down some of your fruit. It was a dangerous drive, and Jim would not take the risk of coming on when the wind began to blow at sixty miles an hour on the hill. So we stopped at Brook's Tavern and left as early as we could. When we came to Mapleton you were not here, and James would not stay. I don't think he liked having had to stop with me at the tavern; he was worried about that and so was I. But we didn't see how anybody could ever know anything about it; and I felt it was best not to explain it to you.'

'Everybody knows everything about it.'

'But what put that idea into your head?'

'Beaversham was there and he saw you both.'

'Oh!'

'And he and his wife, will spread the news and I am a disgraced man.'

'Don't be silly, Alfred. Surely you are not a child to be frightened at every malicious bit of gossip! My God! Have you ever trusted me?'

'What was taking you over to Kingston so often? Just the pleasure of seeing the city or your friends?'

She was silent; she could not tell him that she was fighting to rescue Arthur from the machinations of the Beavershams, and of course she had not heard what Arthur had said to his uncle about the impossibility of a marriage between him and Hazel Beaversham.

'You go to Kingston every now and then, for no very obvious purpose,' continued Mr. Pemberton. 'Then you are caught in a common place with a young man. You yourself

say that you did not believe anyone would see you there. Isn't it all very plain? Do you take me for a fool?

'You are talking very foolishly at any rate. You yourself told me the day I returned that you had been held up at Morley. You had not intended to stay there the Thursday night had you? But the wind and the rain compelled you to, and you did not come on to Mapleton until lunchtime. Very well; the same rain and wind that kept you out that night compelled me to stop at Brook's Tavern. That is all there is to it. And as for people talking about me, you know quite well that if they had nothing to say they would invent something. The only thing to do is to ignore them.'

'That might suit you,' he replied, 'but Beaversham and the rest will not be easily ignored. And there is myself. There is myself, I . . . !'

'You are ill, Alfred; you look wretched. I am sorry if I acted imprudently, but you must believe me; surely you cannot think. . . .'

'I don't know what to think. I don't want to think. If I think too much I might go crazy. What I know is that I made a mistake when I married you.'

He rose and left the room with halting steps. He called for a maid and ordered her to pack a handbag for him; he spoke very quietly, striving not to give a hint of his feelings to any servant. Then he went back to Gladys, who was still sitting in the library, miserably wondering what this new and unexpected development would lead to.

'I am going over to spend a few days with Arthur,' he said; 'I don't feel like staying here.'

'You mean you are leaving me?'

'I don't know yet what I mean to do. But just now I cannot stay in the same house with you.'

'Very well.'

He had gone to Arthur, and of course he would tell Arthur all that had occurred; he would seek someone whom

he could trust to confide in, perhaps lean on his nephew for counsel. What would Arthur think? What would he say? Appearances were all against her; it was idle to try to disguise this, and she was in the habit of looking ugly facts in the face. Arthur did not know the reason why she had been going to Kingston so often of late; might he not believe, then, that she had gone to meet James Cuthbert? She had told him how sick she was of this life of hers as his uncle's wife, she had said frankly, in answer to his question, that she would leave it all and go away with him; and he had replied that he must be faithful to his uncle, though he had intended no rebuke. Might he not now leap to the conclusion that she, believing that there was nothing to hope for or expect from him, had turned to another man; a man young, handsome, and one who admired her? Was not that probable?

After all, she had married Alfred though caring for Arthur, and Arthur had thought hardly of her in consequence. Why should he not suspect her now, on hearing that she had passed a whole night in a miserable wayside tavern with James Cuthbert? Her tale was true, but how many true tales were not disbelieved when they seemed strange, if not incredible? How many persons would accept her explanation without doubt?

So this was the end? She had schemed and planned for much, had gained it; she had been abundantly successful to all outward seeming. But more and more of late it had seemed to her that she had only grasped the shadow of life, that the substance had escaped her; and now it appeared that she was about to lose even the shadow also—everything.

There would be no open scandal; she knew Alfred well enough to know that. He would not talk about divorce: the very idea of a court with all its horrible publicity would make him shudder. She supposed he would send her back to England, and he would make her some sort of allowance; when he died that allowance would probably continue; he would

still try to protect his name. But the money—she knew her husband—would be just enough for her to live upon with a fair degree of comfort; a few hundred pounds a year. And he would probably stipulate that she must never come back to Jamaica.

Well, she didn't think as much of money now as once she did; but, no matter how much secrecy was observed by Alfred, the truth would be guessed at somehow, and her name would be mud among those who had courted her, when once she had lost her position and been exiled. Even that seemed a matter of little importance to her now. But Arthur? She would be cut off from him forever if he believed the worst about her. And he would believe the worst. His uncle's story, her own past selfishness and materialism, the grim fact that she had been seen in a wayside tavern, at night, with James, when she might so easily have stayed over with friends in Kingston—it was all so conclusive, so damning. Arthur would judge her harshly. He had thought himself badly treated by her. Now he would feel that his uncle had been betrayed, and would regard her as a creature without faith, and without capacity for devotion to anyone.

She buried her face in her hands, hopeless.

'Good heavens, Uncle Alfred, what is the matter?'

Arthur hurried down his front steps to help his uncle, who tottered as he alighted from his car.

'Nothing, nothing much, my boy. At any rate, nothing for you to be alarmed about. Let us sit where nobody will interrupt us. I shall be staying with you for a few days.'

'Come this way. But Gladys, is she coming over too? You look ill, worried to death. What is the matter?'

'You mustn't breathe a word of what I am going to say to you, Arthur; but I have to talk to someone, and you are the right person . . . It is about Gladys.'

Arthur's heart gave a wild leap. That some terrible story

was about to be told he had no doubt. In silence he seated himself beside his uncle on the shaded front veranda. The old man's appearance frightened him.

Mr. Pemberton began his narration with an evident effort, speaking as one who suffers deeply. He watched Arthur closely, with a sort of pitiful anxiety, fearful as to how his nephew might take this tale of Gladys's behaviour, yet anxious too, as though hoping against hope that the young man would not think the very worst of it. He was brief; and then his face assumed an expression of puzzled relief. For as he ended his story, saying how he had asserted to Beaversham that he had known all about James and Gladys being together at the tavern, and how he had ordered the wretched little bag of bones out of his town office, Arthur's countenance cleared completely and he burst into laughter. So that was how Arthur looked on the affair!

'Good for you, Uncle Alfred!' Arthur cried; 'and now Beaversham won't go about saying much, neither he nor his precious wife and daughter. You have put the kybosh on them. But you don't need to take this matter so tragically. Of course Gladys should have told you about it, that would have been best; but sometimes you do cut up rough over nothing, you know; one can never say what you are going to do. I quite understand how Gladys felt.'

'Then—then you don't think there is anything in it, Arthur?'

'Anything in it? What the deuce do you mean? How could there be anything in it? Isn't the whole thing as plain as a pikestaff? You are not doubting Gladys, are you?—but, I am sorry to say, that is exactly what you seem to have been doing! Shame, Uncle Alfred! And you have been worrying yourself to death over an incident that is understood the moment it is explained: that is, of course, if you know the people concerned.'

'But Cuthbert, Arthur?'

'A very decent fellow; one of the best. He is in love with

that Morsden girl, and you will soon be hearing of their engagement. *She* isn't going to be foolish if she hears of this tavern business; she will believe Jim, if he takes the trouble to mention it to her. And you—well!

'You are a good boy, Arthur,' said Mr. Pemberton, humbly. 'You have relieved my mind. You are right; Gladys acted foolishly—well, I don't know that she really did, for it is true there was a storm and that the Junction Road was blocked that night and for two days after; and I am a jealous old fool.'

'And that's that,' commented Arthur. 'Confession is good for the soul. But you knew how to fix Beaversham's business: there was no foolishness there. He'll be afraid now. Of course it is he who has been spreading that nasty rumour, and now he and the whole damn family will get busy putting it about that you have known all about Jim and Gladys stopping at Brook's Tavern and thought it was the only thing they could do; he will try to shield himself, you see, lest you should take any sort of action against him. So you have nothing to worry about.'

'I hope so,' said Mr. Pemberton, 'indeed I think you're quite right. And now I should like to lie down and rest a little.'

'Go to your room at once. And, say, hadn't I better send over and ask Gladys to come to dinner and to stay a few days, if you are going to remain? You must have left her in a devil of a state.'

'Yes; perhaps you are right. Ask her to come over to dinner and to sleep the night, but not for longer: I shall go back to Mapleton tomorrow morning. Tell her I said so, and that I hope she will do her best to come.'

'Write her a note yourself.'

'You think that's best, eh? Well, I agree with you.'

He sat down at a table and penned a brief note to Gladys, but brief as it was it conveyed a sort of apology: she would hardly fail to understand that the difference which threat-

ened to be so serious was completely eliminated now. Then he went to the room he always occupied when at Morley.

'Don't wake me till near dinner time,' he said to Arthur.

Arthur sent off the note by car, and then sat down to think. Gladys was not to blame; he needed no one to assure him of that; but he wondered, had he not known of Gladys's love for him, had he not loved her as he did, would he have had such implicit faith in her, would he have brushed aside so lightly this ugly story that Beaversham had told? He wondered: how did she think he would act when he heard it?

She was here. She had come over as quickly as possible; her husband's note, Arthur's, had told her all that they had meant to convey. 'So you believed me?' she said hurriedly, 'and you made Alfred believe me too?'

'That was easy. He is sleeping now; it is nearly time to wake him.'

'I will go to the room.'

A minute later her voice rang out insistently: 'Arthur, come here! Quick!'

He hurried to her. Lying halfway out of the bed and breathing stertorously was Mr. Pemberton, totally unconscious.

CHAPTER 23

DR. CROSEBY said it was a stroke. Ten years before he had treated Mr. Pemberton for his high blood pressure, which had gone down; but the excitements and new way of life occasioned by his marriage had evidently brought it on again; Mr. Pemberton had recently turned over a new leaf, but had turned it over in a wrong direction.

Dr. Croseby dwelt upon the fact that a decade before his old friend had been threatened with the malady which now had killed him; this end was therefore merely the inevitable sequel and termination of what had begun so long before. The doctor said nothing of the effect which the shock of the Ramsingh affair must have had on a physical condition not vitally strong. And he knew nothing of Mr. Pemberton's jealousy and the Brook's Tavern incident.

'I am a doctor,' he remarked when he was summoned to Mr. Pemberton's bedside and saw that consciousness would never be recovered; 'but I believe that no one really dies before his time.' Then he set himself to wait and to watch, grieving, for he had always had for Alfred Pemberton a sincere feeling of friendship.

The Governor himself went to the funeral; Mr. Beaver-sham: all who counted, and hundreds who did not count (though they thought they did), formed a long cortège. Such obsequies would have delighted the heart of Mr. Pemberton could he have known about them; and who shall say that he did not? It was the sort of funeral he would have thought desirable assuming that any funeral could be conceived of as desirable: it was attended by the best people, in the sun

of whose circle the poor gentleman had always warmed himself, having indeed been born in and to that circle.

And—Gladys and Arthur thought of this with gratitude—he had gone to lie down in peace on that last day at Morley. He had passed from consciousness into oblivion with no harsh feeling towards the two for whom he cared most in the world. All misunderstandings had been cancelled out; he had forgiven Arthur long, long before, he had defended Gladys to Mr. Beaversham; he had at the penultimate hour believed in her innocence, and had been pleased that it was his nephew who had shown him how silly his suspicions had been. His had not been such a bad ending. And who does not really believe, in his or her heart of hearts, that one's end only comes when it absolutely must; that 'it was written on our forehead on the day of our birth?'

The will was a very simple affair, considering the amount of property and money left. There were bequests to faithful old servants, something for the churches near Mapleton, three-fifths of the landed property to Arthur, the remaining two-fifths to Gladys; but, also, two-thirds of the ready money in banks and securities and insurance were left to her, and that was a considerable amount. There was actually more for her than for Arthur; yet Arthur was now one of the best-off proprietors in the colony; his uncle had known that, with considerable unencumbered property, and sufficient capital, the young man would in a few years probably double his wealth. Certain it was that the income of each of them would not amount to thousands: according to all the Jamaica standards of wealth they were rich. For income tax was not heavy, and all real estate was religiously undervalued for death duties or property tax. In these days of democratic encroachments the rich must protect themselves by such poor but yet effective means as still remain to them.

Two months after the funeral, and after a preliminary

settling of affairs, Gladys sailed for England. It was said at once by those who were not in her circle of acquaintance, that she had shaken the dust of Jamaica forever off her shoes, that she hated the place and loathed the people; those who said this adding bitterly that she was willing enough to take money from Jamaica to lead a gay and glorious life elsewhere. Then, after remaining away some four months, during which time Arthur paid a flying visit to England, she came back, about two weeks after Arthur; and then those who had been positive as to her determination to clear out of the island for good now said that all along they had known she would return, and had indeed prophesied it—probably to the stars—for whereas in any big country she would be lost, would cut no figure, would be an unconsidered unit among thousands of better birth, higher position, greater wealth, here in Jamaica, she could queen it and be one of the leading ladies in the land. So it seemed that whatever she did was blameworthy, or, at any rate, blamed. But the censure came mainly from those who were not of her set and who had never been invited to her entertainments.

And now, this afternoon, three weeks after her return, Gladys was at a Garden Party at King's House, and, as one newspaper with a fine taste for originality put it, 'the world and all his wives were there'.

A long stream of motor-cars had poured through the gates of the Governor's official residence and deposited their occupants at the entrance to the vestibule, with its old Throne-chair and its carpets of royal blue. Up the broad stone stairs, thickly covered with plush, the guests had trooped, to have their names announced by one of the correctly habited gentlemen-in-waiting, or A.D.C.'s, and there they had been received by Sir Arthur, and Lady Mugsley had bowed and shaken hands, and then gone down by an opposite stairway into the spacious and sunlit gardens. The sward was springy, the trees planted here and there, and carefully tended,

showed green and umbrageous; the pale blue hills to north and east seemed a frame to this festive scene. It was warm, but a kindly breeze from the sea had been blowing all the day, the trade wind which was strong by the seashore, but here, some miles away, was tempered and refreshing. The sun was sharp if you wandered away from shady spots and walks, sharp and yellow, all-illuminating; but it gave compensations, for in its light the variegated colours of ladies' dresses shone out, and the moving figures formed a dazzling kaleidoscope.

Tea tables were set all about the lawn; the tennis courts were already occupied by eager players; scarlet flowers bursting on great trees flamboyantly contrasted with the green of the ground and the blue of distant hills and sky, and looked like a fiery proclamation of joyousness and beauty. Men in lounge suits (though a few also were attired in morning coats and top-hats) moved about incessantly, attending the ladies, bringing them refreshments, greeting acquaintances. Over a thousand persons were present at this reunion of society. The Governor and his wife were At Home.

Amongst these people walked Arthur and Gladys, stopping every now and then to hold a few minutes' conversation with persons whom they knew.

It had got about that since her return she had become engaged to Arthur.

Privately engaged, of course, for it was but six months since her husband's death, and they would not be married for some little time yet. He was such a nice man, was Mr. Pemberton, but, you know, dear, she is so young, and we are sure he would never have wanted her to remain single for long if she loved someone, especially if it should be such a fine young fellow as Arthur Norris. Did we hear that story about some girl in the country, an East Indian? Oh, yes; but there wasn't much in it; besides, a young man will sow his wild oats, and the husband was a cruel brute who lived on

ganga—an awful thing, that ganga—do they eat it with rice, or what? Oh, smoke it?—yes, that is it: they smoke it, day and night, like tobacco. And then they get jealous over nothing at all. It is not fair to Arthur Norris even to remember such a thing. They say that he has six or seven thousand pounds a year. Such an excellent young fellow!

She? Oh, charming! Rich, but not at all spoilt. And a great artist; she used to paint lovely pictures: landscapes, and dying groups and all that sort of beautiful thing; but she had to give it all up when she married; her social duties, you know. Lily Reamster there knows some of her work. Don't you Lily?

'Yes, and it is ripping,' asserted Miss Lily Reamster, when someone asked her the question direct. 'I was one of the first people she became acquainted with here, and I always thought a world of her and her work. There is nobody in Jamaica who can paint like her.'

'No one,' agreed Mrs. Smith-Parsley, with genuine and heartfelt enthusiasm. Gladys had made Smith-Parsley her lawyer; she had remembered that the Smith-Parsleys had been among the first society people in the colony to take her up, and she was not ungrateful. Besides, it was nice to know that you could help those who were once greater than yourself but who now looked up to you with admiration and regard. We are human and we love to scatter largesse—in moderation.

'She has a wonderful perspective,' said Mrs. Smith-Parsley; 'you should see it.' And she did not understand why Mr. Somers, the art critic then on a visit to Jamaica, was taken with so sudden a fit of coughing.

And so the talk went on when Gladys and her cavalier were glimpsed by those who knew them or by those who had heard of them. They had a feeling that they were being talked about; they sensed that they were being talked about kindly, for on every side the glances that they caught were friendly, full of admiration, and Gladys's spirits rose in con-

sequence. How nice were people, how cordial, how fine and gay was life, how well worth living! Whites and blues and pinks, silks and other dainty materials moved and passed, and pretty faces smiled, and lively laughter bubbled forth. It was warm, but no one recked of that. It was bright, and men and women were cheerful. Gladys saw Arthur lift his hat and bow; she turned quickly in the direction in which he looked, and, before she knew what she was doing, had bowed like him, and had smiled pleasantly also, for she was sure she knew the people. Then she suddenly realised whom she had acknowledged in so cordial a fashion. For there slowly walked Hazel Beaversham, with a naval man at her side, a young Commander, tall and handsome; and Hazel, radiant, carried her head proudly as though she were a beautiful little ship sailing triumphantly into harbour at last.

Behind her came her father and mother, and they had caught Gladys's smile and bow and had answered it with emphasis, believing that it had been intentional. They too looked satisfied: the Commander was not an Admiral yet, but he might be some day; at the least he would not retire until he was a Captain. And his father, who had a wool-spinning business in Bradford, was a man of some means who would see to it that his three sons should not want; the young man was sure to have some money. And Hazel would have some. And the Navy, as Mrs. Beaversham was never tired of insisting in these days, was the Senior Service. Indeed, she never spoke of the Navy now. She always said the Senior Service. And it seemed as though her ancient hope of an Admiral as a son-in-law might yet materialise. It might be that her ambition, abandoned once, but now resurgent, might see itself justified in days to come.

Hazel had smiled and bowed to Gladys in return; then an impulse took her. She walked up to Gladys and Arthur and exclaimed: 'I haven't seen you for an age, Gladys; I am so glad you have come back.' And Gladys took her hand, as

though they had always been the best friends in the world, and said that she too was delighted to be back.

Then the Commander was introduced, and he suggested that they might all have tea together; but Gladys begged to be excused; she told him and Hazel that she and Arthur had already promised to have tea with the Governor and Lady Mugsley, otherwise they would have been delighted, etc. But, of course, they would meet again.

Then they parted most pleasantly, and Mrs. Beaversham was heard to remark to more than one person later in that afternoon what a beautiful girl Gladys Pemberton was, and how charming; while Mr. Beaversham professed to have been her late husband's closest friend. The Beavershams made up their minds then and there to call on Gladys shortly. They were assured now of a friendly reception, and wasn't there a divine commandment about allowing the dead past to bury its dead? There had, too, as Mr. Beaversham knew, been no witness to that scene in Annatto Bay when he had thought it expedient to move sideways and quickly out of a room lest a devastating trick should befall him. Yes; he for one was willing to forget the past.

It was after the last guest had been received that Lady Mugsley's particular little party assembled for tea. These were the Vice-Admiral in command of the visiting squadron in the harbour, the Colonial Secretary and his wife, four English visitors who were staying at King's House, and Gladys and Arthur. The round tea-table was presided over by Lady Mugsley and situated near a clump of trees that gave a grateful shade. The eyes of scores of people were fixed upon this group; they saw Gladys Pemberton at the very peak of the social mountain, securely placed, sheltered from all adverse circumstances. Then, as Gladys took her cup of tea, the Admiral, who sat by her, made a sudden movement, and the tea was half-spilt.

'How stupid of me, how clumsy' he cried with a little

laugh of embarrassment, 'but I don't think it has soiled your dress, Mrs. Pemberton.'

'No, it hasn't,' said Gladys, who had moved her hand quickly to avoid such a catastrophe. 'It really doesn't matter. There's many a slip 'twix the cup and the lip, you know.'

'There's always another cup,' said Lady Mugsley, as she poured out some more tea for Gladys.